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G. Gregory

An history of the  
Christian Church

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die as I have lived—a curate. I do not, however, on this account repine. I am not so unreasonable as to think that the revenues of any establishment can be so extensive as to gratify the views of every candidate; nor so vain as to imagine that my merits or services entitle me to any extraordinary share: and I mention the circumstance chiefly to prove that, though a Clergyman of the Establishment, I can write in its defence as disinterestedly as a Layman; and that I am neither influenced by the fear of losing my present preferment, nor by the hope of new acquisitions.

The preparing of this new edition for the press has cost me some reading and some pains, and I must confess that I am a little solicitous with respect to its reception among men of sense and candour; should your Lordship, in particular,

ticular, continue to think my labour  
not fruitlessly employed, it will afford  
real satisfaction to

Your Lordship's

Most faithful and obliged servant,

G. GREGORY.

*Chapel-Street, }  
Bedford-Row. }*



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O F

V O L. I.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE FRONTISPIECE TO  
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N<sup>o</sup> 1, An Instrument resembling in some Sort the *Talons* of Carnivorous Birds, with which the Bodies of the Martyrs were lacerated: preserved in the Museum of the Vatican.

2, The *Boia*, or Brazen Collar with Iron Spikes, which was fastened about the Necks of the Christians in Prison, and by the Ring of which they were chained.

Carcer illigata duris colla boiis impedit.

Prudent. Hymn 1. Perist. 45.

Et chalybs attrita colla gravibus ambit circulis.

Ibid. 72.

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From the Original in the Borgian Museum at Veletri.

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3, An *Iron Tenter-Hook* driven into the Skull of a Martyr; found in the Cemetery of St. Agnes. Vid. *Mamach.* as cited in N<sup>o</sup> 5.—Prudent. *Arevel.* ib.

4, *Pincers*; copied from those preserved in the Church of St. Peter.

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## P R E F A C E.

**T**O be ignorant of the rise, progress, establishment, corruption, and reformation of the religion we profess, is not only unpleasant, but disgraceful. The well-disposed Christian however, who is neither possessed of much learning nor of much leisure, will find it difficult to gratify his laudable curiosity in this respect from any of the voluminous histories of the Church, which have been hitherto published, and least of all from the tedious and almost unintelligible work of Mosheim. Even those whose profession leads them to these studies (independent of the enormous expence of these publications) will find it difficult to glean from them a clear and distinct history of Christianity. I was myself fully sensible of these inconveniences, when engaged in a course of study preparatory to holy orders; and I determined, if Providence should ever grant me leisure, to attempt such a clear and comprehensive abridgment of ec-



clesiastical history, as might relieve others in some measure from the difficulties which I had experienced.

Such were the impressions under which these volumes were originally compiled. The very favourable reception they experienced from the public, and from the two universities in particular, has laid me under an obligation to present them to the world in a more perfect form. Though the title-page only sets forth that the edition has been "corrected and enlarged," it is yet proper to inform the reader, that the second volume is almost entirely re-written; and though in the former edition I was indebted for a considerable part of the materials of that volume to Mosheim and other modern authors, the late Dr. Robertson is the only one to whom I have at present a similar obligation. In the account of the reformation in Germany I have almost implicitly followed him, and sometimes in his own words; and this I was induced to do, because I could no where find so safe and so good a guide. The history of the reformation in England and Scotland is entirely new, and cannot fail, I trust, to be acceptable in this country.

In

In the first volume also several important additions will be found ; I have taken some pains in particular to give a clear account of the doctrines of the four first centuries, which was wanting in the first edition ; and in which all the ecclesiastical histories extant are remarkably deficient : on the whole, indeed, I am not conscious of having omitted any important fact in the history of the church.

It would be a display of my own poverty, if I was to point out all the distinct parts of the work in which I have been assisted. Let it suffice to say, that my obligations are greatly increased to that *friend*, who rendered such material service to the former edition. The notes with which I have been favoured by my truly learned and inestimable friend Mr. Henley of Rendlesham, I have endeavoured to distinguish by the initial of his name; but there are many communications of his which could not be specified, because inserted in the body of the work. The learned world will doubtless feel greatly obliged by his elaborate dissertation on the Vision of Constantine, inserted as an appendix to the first volume. I am also under considerable obligations to some other friends, whose names would be sufficient

cient to give celebrity to any publication, but whom I am not permitted to mention.

Though an Ecclesiastic of the Church of England, I have endeavoured to treat every sect of Christians with candour; and I can truly say that I love and respect them all. Nothing would give me more pain than the consciousness of having misrepresented any. I have in general extracted my account of their tenets from their own writers; and if I have been guilty of any mistake, it has been solely for want of perfect information concerning them.

G. G.



AN  
H I S T O R Y  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

---

THE FIRST CENTURY.

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CHAP. I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGION  
PREVIOUS TO THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

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*Two Systems of Religion prevalent from the early Ages, both derived from the same Source—Origin of Paganism—Mistakes concerning the ancient Traditions—Worship of the Heavenly Bodies—Applying the Titles of the Gods to the early Monarchs—Local Deities—Idolatry—Nature of the Jewish Religion—State of the World at the Birth of Christ—Social Genius of Polytheism—Grecian Philosophy—Epicurean—Peripatetics—Stoics—Platonics—Oriental Philosophy—Religious State of Judea—Pharisees—Sadducees—Essenes—Civil State—Herod—Profligacy of the Nation.*

**I**N the great chain of history, every event is so closely connected with that immediately preceding, and so much governed by the contingent circumstances of manners, time, and place, that

an account of any given period, with no retrospect whatever to past transactions, would afford a detail frequently unintelligible, and in general dry and uninteresting. It appears necessary, therefore, on the present occasion, to lay before the reader a short statement of the progress of religion from the first periods of society, in order to enable him to judge properly of the great importance of the Christian dispensation, and of the causes which impeded or accelerated its progress.

The exuberance of human folly and superstition has branched out into innumerable ramifications; but it would be neither useful nor convenient to pursue, with a minute attention, all the meanders of absurdity. Such a history would be little more than a catalogue of names, or a dull recital of correspondent rites, and similar ceremonies. In this short abstract of religious history I shall, therefore, consider the subject under two divisions; the religion of the Pagans, and that of the Jews. The former will serve to convey a general idea of the natural deviations of the human mind from reason and truth; the latter will exhibit the miraculous foundations of that majestic structure, which was completed in the Christian dispensation.

However different in their progress, there can be little doubt that the two great forms of religion which divided the whole of the habitable world before the birth of Christ, proceeded originally from the same source.—The belief of a chaos, and creation;  
ation;

ation; of a deluge, and the re-peopling of the world from a single family, has pervaded every system of religion with which we are acquainted \*. Not to enlarge upon the astonishing agreement, with respect to these great facts, between the sentiments of distant nations; I confess, I know no chain of reasoning which could lead men, in a rude stage of society, to the adoption of such opinions. It appears a much easier hypothesis, that the earth should have existed from eternity, than that it should have been formed, by an Omnipotent Creator, from a mass of jarring materials: still more improbable and useless would have been such a fiction, as that of a general deluge. Nay, it is well known that these facts agree in most of the circumstances, as related by the Pagan fabulists and historians, with the sacred writers; and there is, therefore, the utmost reason to believe, that they were preserved by tradition, during successive generations, till the labours of the poets proved a more certain vehicle to transmit them to posterity. It is impossible not immediately to see the connexion and similarity between the characters of Noah and Deucalion: and a distinguished scholar of the present age has attempted to shew the same remarkable fact to be darkly shadowed in the popular

\* A valuable communication from Sir W. Jones, published in the Bishop of Llandaff's Sermons and Tracts, has demonstrated that such are the ancient opinions of the Bramins.



story of the Argonautic expedition \*. The flight from Babel is no less certainly commemorated in the ancient fables ; and the same eminent critic and antiquarian has made it sufficiently apparent, that the expedition of Bacchus is no other than a poetical representation of this primeval emigration.

The first principles of religious knowledge, imparted to the fathers of the human race, were few and simple. They were unsupported by the knowledge of letters, and such as would easily admit of corruption, from the timid and credulous nature of man. One of the first deviations from the truth was, certainly, the worship of the heavenly bodies. The first men had been accustomed to a direct communication with the Supreme Being ; it was, therefore, not unnatural in their offspring to expect a continuance of the same indulgence. But, in looking round for the visible manifestation of the great Ruler of the universe, to what object would ignorance and superstition so naturally direct themselves as to that glorious luminary, whose nature and phænomena must be necessarily so imperfectly understood, and who is the dispenser of light, of warmth, and of cheerfulness to the whole creation ? The sun † was, therefore, very early an object of worship

\* See Bryant's *Mythology*.

† Τῆς δὲ κατ' Αἰγυπτίον ἀνθρωπίνης το παλαιον γενομενης, ἀναβλεψάντας εἰς τόν κοσμον, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὀλῶν φύσιν καταπλαγείας καὶ θαυμάσαντας, υπο-  
λαβὼν εἶναι δύο θεοὺς αἰδίας δὲ καὶ πρῶτης, τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὴν σελήνην, ὡς τὸν

μεν

worship with all nations but that singular people to whom the knowledge of the Omnipresent God was revealed. From the adoration of the sun, the transition to that of the moon was the most natural that possibly could be imagined. Thus the Egyptians worshipped the sun and moon by the names of *Osiris* and *Isis*; the former of which, in the Egyptian tongue, signified *many-eyed* \*, from the sun's overlooking all that passes in the world; the latter signified *the ancient* † : Isis, moreover, was generally painted with horns, in allusion to the lunar crescent ‡.

When the traces of ancient tradition were become faint in successive generations, the human imagination sported in the wantonness of fiction. From the broken fragments of true history, the want of combination in hieroglyphic representations, and the mutilated remains of ancient records or language, innumerable superstitions were fabricated, and received with all the avidity of popular

μεν Οσιριν, την δε Ισιν ονομασάι. Diod. Sic. l. i. f. 1. Plat. Cratyl.

As a proof that the first notions of religion among barbarous people take their rise from these celestial phænomena; when the moon is in its wane, they say, in Otaheite, the spirits are devouring the Deity; and when it increases, he is recruiting himself,—Cook's last Voyage, vol. i. p. 166. May not the mode of personifying these heavenly bodies, which even at present pervades all languages, have proceeded from this notion?

\* Πολυοφθαλμον.—Diod. Sic. l. i. f. 1.

† Το παλαιον.—Diod. Sic. l. i. f. 1.

‡ Ibid,

credulity. The deluge proved a most fertile source of error. The venerable patriarch Noah, from being revered as the father of men, came at last to be worshipped under different names, as their creator. He is evidently the Saturnus, the Janus, the Poseidon or Neptune, the Thoth, Hermes, Menes, Osiris, Zeuth, Atlas, Prometheus, Deucalion, and Proteus of all the ancient fables\*. Not only the patriarch himself, but all the circumstances of his history, have been strangely metamorphosed into divinities. The dove, the ark, even the raven and the olive-branch, have all occupied different places in the sacred mysteries of Paganism, and with direct allusions to their derivation †.

In the same manner *Men* or *Menes*, one of the Egyptian divinities ‡, was the same with the celebrated Minos of Crete, upon which island there was a temple or tower to this divinity, called *Men-tor*, or the tower of Menes. To this temple the Athenians were annually obliged to send some of their youth to be sacrificed, in the same manner as the people of Carthage sent their children as victims to Tyre ||. From these circumstances arose the beautiful fable of the Minotaur; and as there was

\* See this decidedly ascertained in the second volume of Bryant's Mythology.

† Ibid. vol. ii.

‡ Originally the patriarch Noah. Ibid.

|| Diod. Sic. l. xx.



a *Men-tor* in Crete, there was a *Tor-men*, now Taormina, in Sicily, where the same brutal rites were also performed. These towers were commonly situated on the sea-coast ; they were peculiarly dreaded by mariners ; wherefore, the same author supposes, with much probability, that the tremendous Scylla was no other than one of those fatal temples, where the shipwrecked stranger was inhospitably sacrificed. In the same temples the rites of fire were performed. Hence arose the celebrated fable of the Furies : as the term *Furia* is evidently derivable from *Phur* (fire), the priestesses of which, being engaged in these inhuman and inhospitable rites, were not improperly converted into the tormentors of the damned.

The next grand depravation of the human mind, with respect to religion, proceeded from confounding the names and characters of the early monarchs with those of the Gods. Perhaps the first legislators might be ambitious of asserting the divine origin of their institutions ; perhaps they might assume to themselves a celestial character, and might find it no difficult matter to persuade their ignorant countrymen that the immortals had condescended to visit the earth in a human form. Or perhaps, with more probability, they might only appropriate to themselves the appellations of the deities ; and the mistakes of future ages may have fabricated a mythology from this confusion of names. The names of Isis and Osiris, which I

have already noted as the first of the Egyptian divinities, were soon applied to the early monarchs of that mythologic region : and thus the original application of these titles was soon forgotten \*. The history of these divinities is no longer that of the two heavenly bodies which they originally denoted, but that of a succession of princes, who assumed those high denominations, and whom the unfaithful records of tradition have strangely converted into two celestial potentates, who continue to direct the affairs of men, but who formerly condescended to visit that favoured people in a human form †. Where there is no exact register of time, facts or histories traditionally preserved

\* It is probable that the custom of applying the names of these luminaries to sovereigns, might arise from an intermediate gradation ; and that the benign and friendly influence of these divinities were ascribed to the beneficent exertions of sovereigns, and statues of the latter distinguished by the symbolic attributes of the former. The *lotus* and other emblems on the heads of Cleopatra, Ptolemy, &c. may be adduced in support of this opinion. H.

† In the same manner, there is little doubt but that *Cœlum*, or *Οὐρανός*, meant the heavens, or perhaps the power of the heavens ; *Κρόνος*, perhaps, meant originally time, or the seasons, or the deity who presides over them ; as in Latin he is called *Saturnus* (from *Saturari*), the giver of fruits ; but from the application of these names to some of the early kings arose the story of *Κρόνος*, or Saturn, being dethroned and emasculated by his son Jupiter ; nor will any allegorical application whatever conduct us consistently through the whole of the fable. See *Lact.* lib. i. 12.

will

will naturally recede, and the distance of time be enormously increased. The tradition was, in the time of Herodotus, that no God in the form of man had reigned in Egypt for upwards of 11,340 years—a period which the active genius of their priests had taken care to fill up with events, suited to the capacity and the taste of their disciples. During that period of miracles, the sun had no less than four times altered his course; twice rising where he now sets, and twice setting where he now rises \*. When, according to the same tradition, the gods reigned in Egypt, they reigned by turns, nor were they all at once upon earth †. Orus, the son of Osiris, was the last who reigned among them; and this Orus was the Grecian Apollo ‡.

From these sources each nation, after the dispersion of mankind, came, in process of time, to have its peculiar gods; for after such concessions, the establishment of national and local deities seems no very difficult effort of the mind: and if a plurality of gods be once admitted, it is an easy method of accounting for the suggestions of our own minds, to assign the different passions and emotions to their tutelary deities; hence a god of love, a god of war, &c. The social genius of polytheism

\* Herod. l. ii. c. 142.—The amazing accounts of Chinese antiquity had, I doubt not, the same origin, and are equally authentic.

† Οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλα τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι. Ibid. c. 144.

‡ Ibid.



admitted to a free participation of celestial honours, the gods of all nations whether inimical or not. Hence, at the period of our Lord's appearance, almost the whole civilized world acknowledged the same divinities, and the religion of Greece and Rome composed a bulky system, which embraced all the false deities that human folly or mistake had ever invented.

Idolatry was the natural concomitant of such a system as this. The gods of the ancients were only men; their fabulous history was wholly fabricated from the transactions of men who had assumed the names and titles originally appropriated to the heavenly bodies: to exhibit them, therefore, in a human form, or by an allegorical application, in the form of that animal to whose nature their peculiar functions were supposed to bear the strictest analogy, was natural and easy. And if the idea of local deities be once generally admitted, it is no harsh supposition to imagine, that the spiritual being might occasionally visit the shrine which was dedicated to his glory; and thus adoration might easily be transferred from the deity himself to his image or resemblance\*.

Whoever attentively and seriously considers the religion of the Hebrews, will find it totally different in every circumstance from that which

\* See more upon this subject in *Essays Historical and Moral*, essay iv.

has been described. By successive revelations, the knowledge of the one true God was carefully preserved among them. The abominations of Paganism were frequently, indeed, introduced, but their progress was constantly retarded by some fresh interposition of miraculous power. The abstract and metaphysical notions of the divine attributes, so repugnant to human reason in an uncultivated state, were always regarded with veneration by this singular people. He is represented as infinite, eternal, unchangeable, invisible, as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent—characters which agree with none of the heathen deities. This was indeed the first revelation made to man; it was the foundation of the Jewish institutions, and appears to have been consistent with no other system of religion.

There is no part of the Hebrew theology which can be explained from the perversions or misapprehensions of the human imagination. No part of their theology can be resolved into a mistaken history, a corruption of names, or a puerile allegory.

That at a period when the rest of the world was immersed in barbarism and the grossest idolatry; at a period when even the Jewish nation themselves appear to have made but little progress in human science, the most refined theological notions should prevail among them, united with a  
milder

milder and more spiritualized system of morals\* than was to be found in any other nation, can only be accounted for from a superior and more recent revelation. In such a state of civilization, or rather of barbarism, the peculiar providence of God was indeed ever necessary to preserve them in the path of rectitude. The miraculous interpositions of the Deity were, therefore, frequent; and a number of inspired men appeared, from time to time, who served to recall the people to the knowledge of their God, and to invigorate the debilitated system with fresh portions of spiritual information.

But not only the general scheme of the Hebrew theology and ethics differed from those of the heathen, and were superior to them; but even those institutions, which are accounted peculiar to the Israelites, will admit of a rational and consistent interpretation. The rites and mysteries of Paganism were either corrupt and absurd allusions to the patriarchal history †, or they were profligate and unmeaning.

The religious institutions of the Hebrews may all of them be consistently explained upon two principles only. They had either a retrospect to

\* See the Decalogue, the Laws concerning Slavery, the Treatment of other Animals, &c.

† See that incomparable treasury of ancient learning, Bryant's Mythology, passim.

the past, or a reference to the future. They were intended either to preserve in the memories of the people the religion of their ancestors, and to fortify them against the contagion of idolatry; or they bore so clear and decisive a reference to that great object of the whole Mosaical dispensation, the coming of the Messiah, that a considerable part of the Jewish ceremonies have been ever regarded by the learned of that nation, as a great and standing prophecy; and the application of them to the circumstances of Jesus Christ, by himself and his apostles, was so striking and unanswerable, that it served to confound, to silence, and even to convert, their most obstinate opponents.

Much might be added upon this subject; but it is more the business of the divine than of the historian\*. I shall, therefore, hasten to exhibit a short sketch of the state of the two prevailing systems of religion at the time of our Lord's appearance; from which I doubt not but it will evidently appear, that the period, described by the Hebrew prophets, as the *fulness of time*, was now arrived; in other words, that such a revelation as that by Christ Jesus was then absolutely necessary; and further, that this was the only proper season which apparently had

\* It would give me real satisfaction, had I leisure, to complete the parallel in a distinct treatise; as I am convinced there is no speculation which would redound more to the advantage of Christianity.



occurred since the patriarchal ages, for the promulgation of such a dispensation.

The victorious arms of Rome had, at the time of our Lord's descent upon earth, subjected to its sway a considerable part of the known world. Distant nations had either silently submitted to a power too mighty to withstand, or had been compelled to acknowledge the strength and the authority of their triumphant conquerors; and governed either by Roman proconsuls, invested with temporary commissions, or indulged by the republic with the continuance of their own princes and laws, they were reduced to own its claim to supreme sovereignty, and to enroll themselves in the number of its sons and subjects. The power, indeed, of the Roman people was at this time much abridged. The senate retained little of authority but the name, while the empire was in reality governed by the victorious, the crafty, the accomplished Augustus. This extensive empire, so extremely favourable to the civilization of barbarous and remote nations, together with the general diffusion of the Greek language, was particularly conducive to an easy propagation of the Gospel; while a cessation from all the calamities of discord and war\* tranquillized the mind, and

\* Mosheim intimates his dissent from the opinion of general peace then prevailing in the world. The assertion of Orosius, that the temple of Janus was at this time shut, is confirmed by Horace in his 1 Ep. lib. ii.

prepared it for the reception of the mild and rational doctrines of Christ.

United in error, those nations which acknowledged not the Roman power agreed with its professed subjects in idolatry and superstition. Every country, as was already intimated, had its peculiar gods; every people their particular manner of worshipping and propitiating their respective deities; and their religious homage, not confined to the natural world, to the memory of departed heroes, or the improvers of elegance or convenience, was extended to things inanimate, and to persons merely ideal. Mountains, groves, and rivers, were the objects of religious adoration; and even those vices, or those maladies, which are the most destructive of human happiness, were honoured with temples, and served with trembling awe and devout terror. To avoid the imputation of worshipping inanimate beings, many of the heathens pretended, that the deity represented by the statue was really resident in it; and that every part of the visible creation was the residence of some superior being: but the generality, naturally more impressed with sensible than with invisible objects, easily transferred to the symbol, that homage which should have been offered to the God. The knowledge of what were called mysteries, was imparted only to a few, who, previous to their initiation, were compelled to exhibit un-

doubted

doubted proofs of their secrecy, fidelity, and patience, and to conceal, under no less a penalty than the probable deprivation even of life, every circumstance relating to those rites, which were generally subversive of good order, and even of external decorum. The teachers of error, and the base deluders of a wretched and ignorant multitude, the pontiffs or priests, represented the whole of religion as consisting in the performance of certain ceremonies, and the gods as superior to men only in their immortality and power.

Thus their deities, so far from being laudable objects of imitation, were rather examples of enormous but successful crimes; unjust, capricious and partial, whose vengeance was in general appeased, or whose protection was insured, by animal offerings, though some nations supposed these ends could only be attained by the horrible sacrifice of human victims. This absurd system of theology, unsupported by any decided belief of future rewards and punishments, their opinions of which were obscure, licentious, and often more calculated to administer indulgence to vice than incitements to virtue, was regarded by the more enlightened part of mankind as a subject of ridicule and contempt. Nor indeed could any, who were not totally bewildered in error, avoid discovering the absurdity of a religion, which presented no discouragement

to the most depraved propensities, and the perpetration of the most flagitious actions.

To those who have observed that intolerant spirit, which for a trifling difference in religious belief has persecuted wise and good men, and visited the earth with the calamities of war, it will appear extraordinary, that so great a variety of religious systems, and of objects of religious worship, should produce neither dissensions nor war. This general moderation is not, however, to be ascribed to any superiority in the temper or character, but to a circumstance which has been already intimated, to their considering the gods who presided over the earth as local deities, whose influence and jurisdiction extended only to certain countries, and their respective inhabitants; who, it would have been absurd to have expected, should leave their tutelary divinities for the worship of those whom they considered as affording them neither regard nor protection. The Romans extended their religious moderation so far, as not only to tolerate foreign superstitions, but even to naturalize the gods of every conquered nation: but though they granted to their citizens the right of privately adopting those religious tenets of other nations, which were not inimical to their own interests and laws, yet they permitted no innovations to take place in the religion publicly pro-



fessed, and gently insinuated their own peculiar rites and institutions into the religious worship of those whom they had subdued. Policy, no less than religion, prompted them to a step which added to mutual interest the strong tie of mutual faith. Thus their religion, with their conquests, extended over a considerable portion of the globe, and incorporated with the sacred rites of every vanquished nation.

A ray of light faintly illumined this dark and dreary night of ignorance and error. The northern nations had so far emerged from their state of barbarism, as to have made some progress in curious inventions and useful arts; but in the polished states of Greece and Rome, philosophy and learning were eagerly sought, and pursued by all who aspired to elegance and refinement. The Roman youth, however distinguished for his attainments in those arts which luxuriantly flourished in his own republic, could neither be esteemed an orator nor a rhetorician, without completing his studies in the Grecian schools, and imbibing from the purest sources, attic grace and elegance. Hence, the philosophy of Greece found easy access into the Roman republic. Oratory, which was publicly taught in all the great cities by those who styled themselves philosophers, was a successful vehicle for conveying the peculiar opinions of its professors into the youthful and credulous heart: those, there-

therefore, who visited Greece unbiassed by the opinions of any philosophical sect, were not likely to continue insensible to arguments offered to them with every embellishment of eloquence, acuteness, and wit.

The doctrines of the Epicureans and Academics appear to have been eagerly received at Rome. They were, indeed, peculiarly calculated for that great and luxurious people. The followers of Epicurus asserted the fortuitous origin of the world ; the inability and indifference of the gods respecting human affairs ; the mortality of the soul ; and that the life which was most conformable to nature consisted in *pleasure*, of which they constituted sense the judge. While this sect offered to its votaries a licence for the most illicit pursuits, the Academics involved the most important doctrines in infidelity and scepticism, and questioned the existence of the gods, the immortality of the soul, and the superiority of virtue to vice.

Far from having attained to unpolluted knowledge, those sects which boasted a superior purity of morals, were yet greatly defective, and involved in error. The Aristotelians represented the Supreme Being as indifferent to human affairs, and happy in the contemplation of his own excellence. The Stoics described him, indeed, as governing the world, and asserted, that the perfection of happiness consisted in the perfection of virtue ; they peopled

the world with gods, genii, and dæmons\*, and supposed that every man had a tutelary genius assigned him, and that all virtue and happiness consisted in acting in concert with this genius, with reference to the will of the supreme director of the whole. But however plausible and specious these doctrines may appear, several of their leading tenets were not less pernicious than erroneous. The Stoical belief of the deity being corporeal in his nature, was highly derogatory of his dignity, and destructive of their reverence; while their opinions of the mortality of the soul removed the strongest incentive to virtue, and the most powerful restraint upon vice. The exalted genius and profound penetration of Plato had enabled him to discover whatever the mere light of nature could reveal. He taught to his followers the pure doctrine of the unity of God, who is perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient; that he is a being infinitely good, and desirous of rendering all his creatures happy; that the perfection of morality consists in living conformably to his will; that the soul is immortal, and that there is to be a future state of retribution.

\* The agency of genii, i. e. angels and dæmons, made an essential part of the Jewish popular creed: and every thing in the administration of their peculiar system, as well as of the whole mundane system, is represented in the sacred writings, and by Jesus Christ himself, as effected through the agency of such existences. It has often surprised me that divines have taken so little notice of this. H.

These

These doctrines, however approaching to truth and perfection, were yet at a considerable distance. They were often obscurely expressed, and accompanied with some opinions calculated to cherish superstition, and others injurious to the omnipotence of God. The Platonists taught that the Deity was confined to a certain determinate portion of space, and that there was an *invincible malignity* and corruption of matter, which the divine power had not been sufficient to reduce entirely to order.

Having noticed the principal sects of the Greek philosophers, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon those who, though called by other names, were separated from them by slight, sometimes imaginary, partitions. The Oriental philosophy, though termed *gnosis*, or science, that is, *the way to the true knowledge of the Deity*, was the offspring and the parent of error; the source of those pernicious opinions which, in the three first centuries, perplexed and afflicted the Christian Church. Its doctrines were fantastic, ignorant and obscure, founded indeed, in many instances, upon just principles, but its deductions from them were false and absurd. They affirmed, that as the Eternal Mind must be inaccessible to evil, perfect and beneficent in its nature, therefore the origin of evil cannot reside in him, but must be without him; and as there is nothing without or beyond the Deity but *matter*, matter must be the source of whatever is vicious or evil. They



asserted the eternity of matter, which derived its present form not from the will of the Supreme God, but from the creating power of some inferior intelligence who formed the world; alleging that it was incredible that a Being perfectly good, and infinitely removed from all evil, should either create or modify matter which is essentially malignant or corrupt, or bestow upon it any portion of his riches or liberality. Divided into many sects, each of which contended for some favourite error, the Gnostics agreed in acknowledging the existence of an eternal nature, in whom dwelt the fulness of perfection, and represented him as a pure and radiant *light*, diffused through all space; which they termed *pleroma*, or fulness. The formation of celestial beings they accounted for by supposing the Eternal, after having passed innumerable ages in solitude and happiness, to have produced from himself two minds of a different sex, perfectly resembling their divine original, who peopled the *pleroma* with their celestial offspring. These they called *Æons*, or an eternal nature. They supposed the world to be created not by God, but by one of the inferior inhabitants of the *pleroma*, whom they described as being in many respects of an exalted character, but haughty and ambitious; and this being they named *Demiurge*, the governor of the world, from the ruling of which they would have the Deity utterly excluded. They believed that man was composed of a soul, which is of celestial

lestial origin, and which would aspire to worship the true God, were it not that the other half of his nature, which is a corrupt body, supercedes all its more virtuous desires, and attaches it to the pursuits of sensuality. That the Supreme Being employs various means for the deliverance of his creatures from their bondage to sin, but is opposed by the Demiurge, who tempts men to disregard these merciful designs, and to serve him. That those who rise superior to his artifices, and subdue those corrupt affections which sinful matter excites in them, shall at death ascend into the glorious *pleroma*, while the wicked shall pass from one body into another till they become purified. That the world will at length be destroyed by God, who will overcome all evil, release those souls which have been confined in mortal prisons, and dwell with them and happy spirits in glory and happiness to all eternity.

If we advert to the state of the Jewish nation at this period, we shall find that they had introduced the most absurd superstition and the grossest corruption into their worship. The whole of religion, according to their ideas, consisted in the rites appointed by their great law-giver, and the performance of some external acts of duty towards the Gentiles. Uncharitable upon system, they regarded the rest of mankind as excluded from the hopes of eternal life, and treated them with the utmost contempt, rigour, and inhumanity. To

these corrupt and vicious principles were added several superstitious notions concerning the divine nature, magic, invisible powers, &c. which were either derived from the example of neighbouring nations, or imbibed in the Babylonish captivity. The inhabitants of Palestine, divided into Jewish and Samaritan, were rent by intestine commotions, and each regarded the opposite sect with aversion and abhorrence. Even the directors in religious concerns, whose superior knowledge should have exalted them above the ignorant multitude, contributed to their errors, by dividing into a great variety of sects; which, though generally agreed in the ceremonial part of the Jewish religion, were involved in continual disputes.

The principal sects which arose among the Jews, between the time of their return from Babylon, and the Advent of Christ, were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Of these the most considerable in number, learning, and influence was that of the Pharisees\*. They asserted the immortality of the body and soul, and a state of future retribution; opinions which, however compounded with prejudice and error, must tend in no inconsiderable degree to regulate their conduct and purify their minds. Yet were they far from having

\* St. Paul bears them this honourable testimony: "According to the strictest (the exactest) sect of our religion," says he, "I lived a Pharisee."

attained to pure and substantial virtue : they were ostentatious, not devout ; they were austere, not virtuous ; and concealed their inward pollution under the garb of austerity and devotion. To the *written law* they added another, which had been received by oral tradition ; a compound of falsehood, superstition, and absurdity, which they regarded as giving efficacy to the general précept, by pointing out its precise application and extent.

The Sadducees were of opinion, that the rewards and punishments denounced by God, were merely temporal ; and that they neither wanted nor received any divine assistance for the performance of their duty. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, and asserted that there was no resurrection, no future state, and that the whole man perished at death.—Opinions which were so little calculated to discourage vice, and promote virtue, were the certain and natural associates of immorality and corruption.—Opinions so favourable to temporal indulgencies were likely to be adopted by most of those who were endued with the means and opportunities of gratifying their licentious propensities ; and accordingly we find that the Sadducees enjoyed the favour and protection of the great, while the followers of the Pharisees, though more numerous, were generally in a subordinate rank. The Sadducees were the most violent persecutors and oppressors of the  
Apostles,



Apostles, who in their preaching constantly insisted upon the doctrines of the resurrection, a day of judgment, and a state of retribution; whilst the Pharisees were more inclined to protect and support them, and a considerable portion of the first Jewish converts to Christianity, appears to have consisted of the latter sect\*.

Professedly devoted to contemplation and silence, the Essenes affected the utmost privacy and solitude, observed the most absurd austerities, and practised the most fantastical and superstitious observances. In opposition to the Pharisees, who maintained that the rewards and punishments of the law extended both to the soul and body, and that their duration was prolonged in a future state; and to the Sadducees, who assigned to them the same period that concludes this transitory existence; the Essenes asserted, that future rewards extended alone to the soul, and that the body was a mass of

\* Jortin's Remarks, vol. i. p. 176. 2d edition. Many weighty reasons have been assigned why our Lord should more frequently censure the Pharisees than the other sectaries. From their numbers and influence, it was expedient that a reform should begin amongst them. It was also proper that the people should be cautioned against reposing too great a confidence in them. A further reason was, that many of the errors of this sect insinuated themselves immediately into the Christian religion, and remain in it to this day. On the other hand, the sect of Sadducees soon declined. After the destruction of Jerusalem, most of them who escaped that calamity, became Apostates and Pagans, a change for which they were well prepared.

malignant matter, and the prison of the immortal spirit. In process of time they subdivided into sects, each of which was remarkable for the absurdity and folly of its respective tenets ; and while by abstinence, mortification, and fanaticism, they affected to raise the soul to God, they regarded piety as incompatible with social affection, and dissolved, by this pernicious doctrine, those bonds which compose the strength and happiness of human life.

Amidst this general corruption, however, both in doctrines and manners, the Jews were in general zealously attached to the law of Moses, and anxious to preserve that respect and veneration which were due to its divine authority. A number of additional ceremonies had, indeed, by degrees, been introduced into their religious worship \* ; but still they respected their original institutions.

Public seminaries for the instruction of youth, both in religion and science, were erected in the most populous situations, over which men of professed abilities and learning presided. Equally miserable with their neighbours the Samaritans, equally the victims of discord and faction, they were still not so totally sunk in corruption as the worshippers upon Mount Gerizim, who had in-

\* Spencer De Legibus Hebræorum, vol. ii. book 4th, p. 1089 edit. Cambridge.

terwoven the errors and idolatry of the Pagans with the sacred doctrines of Judaism.

Civil causes concurred with the errors and abuses of religion, to complete the miseries of this infatuated people, to convince them of the necessity of a Deliverer, and (had they not unhappily mistaken the nature of the Messiah's kingdom) to prepare them for the reception of the gospel dispensation. Subject to a governor, who was himself a tributary to the Romans, and whose luxury and love of magnificence exhausted their treasures, while his morals and example diffused a general spirit of vice and licentiousness, Judea, at the time of our Lord's appearance, groaned under an accumulated load of misery. Nor were their sorrows alleviated after the death of Herod. His sons were the heirs of their father's vices no less than of his power. The two youngest, Antipas and Philip, had the jurisdiction of one half of Judea, while the other portion was allotted to their elder brother Archelaus, a profligate and corrupt prince, who harassed the Jews with the most rigorous exactions, and at length impelled them, by his vices and mal-administration, to represent their grievances to Augustus, who punished the oppressor by banishing him from his kingdom. This part of Judea was then reduced to the form of a province, and added to the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria; but its unhappy inhabitants, far from deriving any advantages from this arrangement, found they had exchanged

changed one tyrant for many, and that oppressions and miseries were increased by the avarice and cruelty of the prætors, the frauds and extortions of the publicans\*, and the presence of the Romans, whom their religion obliged them to regard as a polluted and idolatrous people. Even their chief priests and rulers were flagitious wretches, who had purchased their places by bribes, or acts of iniquity, and preserved them by the most atrocious crimes. The middle ranks were sunk in profligacy; and the multitude, influenced by these examples, precipitated themselves into an abyss of wickedness, and, by their reiterated crimes, were becoming obnoxious to the justice of God, and the vengeance of Men.

\* See Mosheim, chap. i. sect. 2.



## CHAP. II.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST  
CENTURY.

*Character of the Evangelists—Miraculous Powers—Inspiration—Fates of the Apostles—Time and Circumstances in which the Evangelical Writings were composed—Destruction of Jerusalem—First Persecutions—under NERO and DOMITIAN.*

TO those who, in the writings of the inspired penmen, have had an opportunity of contemplating the life, actions, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer of the World, all accounts of the circumstances attending his abode upon earth must appear superfluous and unnecessary. The pen of inspiration can alone do justice to a character which it could never enter into the human heart to conceive. By that, every circumstance which it was necessary we should be acquainted with, relative to the Saviour of men, is distinctly revealed. He is there exhibited descending upon earth, taking on him the form of a man, by every action of his life affording the most pure and spotless example, and living and dying for the salvation of men, in language so simple, yet so forcible, as to defy imitation. Truth, not ornament, was the object pursued by the first writers of the life and doctrines

doctrines of Christ; and every circumstance attending the narration attests their veracity. Their works supersede the necessity of any accounts of their Divine Master. The writer of ecclesiastical history, therefore, more properly commences his work by relating the circumstances posterior to the death of Christ, than those which attended his life.

Unaided by those external circumstances which give splendour and dignity to opinions hitherto unreceived or unknown, the establishment of Christianity can only be primarily ascribed to the intervention of an over-ruling Providence, and to the forcible and satisfactory nature of that evidence which proves the authenticity of the Christian revelation. The pure doctrines of the Gospel were at first propagated by men who were indigent, illiterate, and selected from the lowest classes of mankind. As the constant companions of their divine master, they were, indeed, indubitable witnesses of the virtue of his life, of the purity of his doctrines, and of the stupendous miracles which he wrought. But they were utterly incapable of decorating their accounts with studied diction, of enforcing them by the authority of superior rank, or of enriching them with the treasures of human learning and eloquence. This system, so pure, so perfect, so opposite to the corruption and depravity which at the time of Christ's appearance upon earth universally prevailed, addressed itself not to the passions,

sions, but to the understandings of mankind ; and the simple majesty of reason and of truth triumphed over all the opposition of prejudice and error.

The first professors of Christianity, who were favoured with the opportunities of observing those astonishing powers which demonstrated the great and supernal nature of their divine master, must have seen with peculiar delight, that in him were united and centred all those miraculous and apparently irreconcilable circumstances, which were predicted by the prophets of the Messiah. Witnesses of his profound knowledge of the human mind, of the accomplishment of his promise to support those who were called to suffer in the cause of truth, and of the fulfilment of his predictions of events utterly improbable, and far beyond the reach of human conjecture ; their reason must have been convinced, and their faith confirmed. These arguments, together with the example of a life devoted by their master to the interests of religion and virtue ; of his death, endured in confirmation of the holy doctrines he had taught ; of his ascension into heaven in the presence of numbers, many of whom would neither have deceived others, nor were likely to be deluded themselves ; were a few of the evidences in support of the Christian revelation, before which the scepticism of many retired with a blush.

The multitude which continually followed Jesus, and the proselytes in distant quarters, who

were, probably, converted by the preaching of the seventy disciples first commissioned to teach the doctrines of Christ, afford us reason to believe, that before the striking event of his resurrection and ascension, very many had already embraced the truths of the Gospel. But Christianity received the most powerful accessions from the gift of the Holy Spirit; which, at a very early period after the ascension of Christ, was conferred upon the Apostles, and empowered them to fulfil their high commission of promulgating eternal peace and happiness to the whole human race. Their ability to address their exhortations to every nation in its own language; their performance of the most surprising miracles; their power to confer miraculous gifts upon others; their irreproachable manners, their benevolent actions, and the purity of their doctrines, gained prodigious accessions to the Christian cause. A considerable body of the Jewish people humbly acknowledged Christ as the Messiah sent from God; and the truths of the Gospel were extended by the Apostles through a considerable part of the Roman empire.

In addition to the accounts furnished by Scripture, tradition has supplied several circumstances relative to the Apostles, and the nations to whom they preached \*; but traditional records are imperfect,

\* There are few Christian nations in Europe which have not claimed the honour of embracing Christianity in the Apostolic



perfect, obscure, and most commonly false. The joint testimony of sacred and profane writers informs us of little more concerning these illustrious martyrs to the truth, than that, after a succession of dangers, difficulties, and distresses, many of them closed a laborious life by a painful and ignominious death. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, was beheaded at Rome in the reign of Nero; and Peter is generally supposed to have been crucified at the same place, and during the same reign\*. The Evangelist John was banished, in the persecution by Domitian, to the Isle of Patmos, in the year 94. On the cessation of the persecution, however, he returned to Ephesus, and visited the churches in that province. Though he was too old to preach, yet he was a constant attendant on public worship; and frequently exhorted the people with this parental exclamation—"My little children, love one another." He died and was interred at Ephesus.

Of the other Apostles and Evangelists still less, if possible, is with certainty known. James, the brother of our Lord, who for his eminent virtue

age. Among the rest, Britain, upon the authority of an obscure passage in Theodoret †, has asserted her pretensions to the glory of having been converted by St. Paul.

\* Dr. Middleton, in his Letter from Rome, p. 125, doubts whether Peter ever visited that city.

† Theodor. tom. iv. ferm. 9.

acquired the sur-name of the Just, continued to exercise his ministry at Jerusalem after the departure of St. Paul. On the death of Festus, a kind of interregnum succeeded in the government of Judea, before the arrival of his successor Albinus; and the Jews, who were full of resentment at the escape of St. Paul, seized the opportunity to imbrue their hands in the blood of this pious and excellent person. He was sentenced by the council to be stoned as a blasphemer; and after praying for his enemies, being thrown from some part of the temple, he was at length released from his sufferings by a blow from a fuller's pole\*. Josephus adds, that Albinus on his arrival was so disgusted by this violent proceeding, that he wrote to the high priest, and threatened to punish him for it.

Many fabulous stories are related of some other of the Apostles. Philip, who resided chiefly in Hieropolis, is said to have raised a person from the dead in that city. Justus, who was sur-named Barsabas, is reported to have drunk poison without receiving any injury from it. Bartholomew † is believed by Eusebius to have preached in India; Thomas in Parthia, and Andrew in Scythia ‡. Of the Apostle Jude scarcely any thing is even pretended to be known.

\* Euseb. Hist. lib. ii. c. 23.

† Ib. lib. iii. c. 39.

‡ Ib. lib. v. c. 10. lib. iii. c. 1.

During the time in which Paul was confined at Rome he composed his Epistles to his brethren, and to the principal churches. The Gospel of Matthew was written for the use of his Hebrew brethren to whom he had preached, when he was about to depart from them, and is generally believed to have been composed in the Hebrew tongue, and afterwards translated into Greek. The Gospel of Mark, who was the friend and companion of Paul, has been thought by some to be only an epitome of that of Matthew. Luke, who is said to have been a physician at Antioch, and as well as Mark and John is supposed to have been one of the seventy disciples, and who accompanied Paul in his ministration, composed the Gospel which bears his name, and the Acts of the Apostles. These three Gospels were succeeded by that of the Evangelist John, who approved of them\*; but, perceiving that their accounts were posterior to the imprisonment of John the Baptist, thought it expedient to give to the church some records of the actions and doctrines of his beloved master, in the beginning of his ministry. Besides this, John is also allowed to have composed at least one epistle, if not more; but the two latter ones, and the book of the Revelations, have excited some controversy concerning their author. These works were quickly dispersed among the Christian believers, and were collected and read in their reli-

\* Euseb. lib. iii. c. 24.

gious assemblies for the confirmation and edification of the faithful. Indeed such a collection, stamped with apostolical authority, soon became necessary, in order to separate the inspired writings from a number of fraudulent and absurd performances, which were circulated as the productions of the Apostles.

Besides the assistance which was derived to Christianity from the actions, precepts, and zeal of its first teachers, the virtues of the primitive Christians afforded a powerful support to the doctrines they professed, and formed a striking contrast to the depravity and corruption which almost universally prevailed. Nor were the opposition and persecution they met with prejudicial to their cause. They only served to unite more firmly this small, but intrepid band, well convinced of the importance of those truths for which they contended; and to attract the notice and compassion of all mankind towards a sect distinguished only for its singularity and virtue. Their implacable enemies the Jews, who saw their own lofty claims to superiority, and their profligate conduct, directly attacked and censured both by the tenets and manners of the teachers of Christianity, assailed them every where with unrelenting fury. Their rancour and animosity, however, towards the Christians, only rendered the accomplishment of those terrible predictions which had been denounced against them by Jesus Christ more appa-



rent and remarkable ; and, by these means, rather accelerated than retarded the progress of Christianity. Many of the previous signs and portents which had been foretold concerning the demolition of the temple, had already taken place, and were such as might have instructed a people less obstinate and perverse, that their destruction was at hand, and might have rendered them cautious of any action which could provoke their enemies against them. Great indeed were the oppressions which they experienced from a corrupt government ; and provoked to fury by its rapacity and violence, in the year 66 they commenced hostilities against the Romans, and the flames of war raged throughout Asia to Egypt and the East. Under the reign of Vespasian, Jerusalem was besieged for six months by Titus ; during which time every calamity that can accompany that most afflictive of the divine visitations, war, was endured by the miserable inhabitants. The city and temple were at length taken by storm ; the conqueror would have saved the body of the temple, but a soldier set fire to an adjoining building, and the whole was unfortunately consumed. Eleven hundred thousand of the Jewish people are said to have perished in the siege and in the sack of the city ; many by famine, and many in the flames and by the sword. Ninety-seven thousand were exposed to sale as slaves ; with which the market was at length so glutted, that no purchasers could be found.

found. Besides these, multitudes were thrown to wild beasts, or sacrificed as gladiators, in the savage sports of the Romans. The Christians at Jerusalem escaped the horrors of the siege by a timely retreat to Pella, a small town beyond Jordan. The remainder of this devoted nation, weakened by their losses, and dispirited by their dreadful calamities, were not, at the close of this century, in a situation to oppose openly a sect which they could not however but secretly regard with even additional rancour.

Though the absurdities of Polytheism were openly derided and exposed \* by the first teachers of Christianity, yet it does not appear that any public laws were enacted against it till the reign of Nero, in the year 64, by which time it had acquired considerable stability and extent. As far the greater number of the first converts to Christianity were of the Jewish nation, one secondary cause for their being so long preserved from persecution may probably be deduced from their appearing to the Roman governors only as a sect of Jews, who had seceded from the rest of their brethren on account of some opinion trifling in its importance, and perhaps difficult to be understood. Nor when their brethren were fully discovered to have cast off the religion of the Synagogue, did the Jews find it easy to infuse into the breasts of the Roman magistrates that rancour and malice

\* Acts, chap. xix. ver. 26.

which they themselves experienced. But the steady and uniform opposition made by the Christians to heathen superstition could not long pass unnoticed. Their open attacks upon Paganism made them extremely obnoxious to the populace, by whom they were represented as a society of atheists, who, by attacking the religious constitution of the empire, merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. The pure and sublime ideas which they conceived of the Supreme Being could not be comprehended by the gross heathen, who required the Deity to be represented by some corporeal figure, or visible symbol, and adored with all the pomp of altars, sacrifices, and libations. The personal guilt which had been contracted by every Christian, in thus preferring his private sentiments to the national religion, was aggravated in a high degree by the number and union of the criminals; for the Romans were accustomed to regard with jealousy and distrust any associations among their subjects. They became, likewise, further obnoxious by their cautious method of performing the offices of religion; which, though at first dictated by fear and necessity, was continued from choice, and it was concluded that they only concealed what they would have blushed to disclose. Horrid tales of their abominations were circulated throughout the empire; and the minds of the Pagans were, from all these circumstances, prepared

pared to regard with pleasure or indifference every cruelty which could be inflicted upon this despised sect.

Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that Nero should select the Christians as a grateful sacrifice to the Roman people, and endeavour to transfer to this hated sect the guilt of which he was strongly suspected, that of having caused and enjoyed the fire which had nearly desolated the city \*. With this view, he inflicted upon them the most exquisite tortures, attended with every circumstance of the most refined cruelty. Some were crucified; others impaled; some were thrown to wild beasts, and others wrapped in garments dipped in pitch and other combustibles, and burned as torches in the gardens of Nero and other parts of the city by night. He was far, however, from obtaining the object of his hopes and expectations; and the virtues of the Christians, their zeal for the truth, and their constancy in suffering, must have considerably contributed to the respectability of their sect, and to make their tenets more generally known †. Alter-

\* It was not at Rome alone, but in the remote parts also of the empire, that persecution prevailed; as is evident from the following inscription in a hamlet of Portugal: — NERONI. CLAUDIO. CAES. AUG. PONT. MAXIMO. OB. PROVINCIAM. LATRONIBUS. ET. HIS. QUI. NOVAM. GENERI. HUM. SUPERSTITION. INCULCAB. PURGATAM. H.

† Tacit. Annal. xv. 44. and Juvenal.



nate seasons of tranquillity and persecution succeeded this barbarous attempt, and by uniting the Christians firmly in one common cause, and giving them time to recruit their wearied powers, proved extremely favourable to the support and propagation of Christianity. From the death of Nero to the reign of Domitian the Christians remained unmolested, and daily increasing; but towards the close of the century, they were again involved in all the horrors of persecution. The death of Domitian, however, soon delivered them from this calamity; and his successor Nerva suffered the Christian church to enjoy a season of tranquillity, and rescinded the sanguinary edicts of his predecessor.

## C H A P. III.

DOCTRINE, GOVERNMENT, AND DISCIPLINE OF  
THE CHURCH.

*Faith of the Primitive Christians—Ecclesiastical Government necessary to the Support of a visible Church—Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons, Deaconesses—Forms of Worship—Sacraments—Excommunication.*

THE whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in two great points, of which the first regards what we are to believe, and the other relates to our conduct and actions; or to express the matter more briefly, the Gospel presents to us objects of *faith*, and rules of *practice*. The former are expressed by the Apostles by the term *mystery*, or the *truth*; and the latter by that of *godliness* or *piety* \*. The rule and standard of both are those books which contain the revelation that God made of his will to persons chosen for that purpose, whether before or after the birth of Christ. And these divine books are usually called *the Old and New Testament*, but more properly *Covenants*.

The principal articles of faith regard the nature of the divine existence, and the person of Jesus

\* 1 Tim. iii. 9. vi. 3. Tit. i. 1.

Christ. For the original faith of the Christian church the Scriptures of the New Testament are certainly the only competent authority; and every succeeding testimony acquires weight and importance only in proportion as it harmonizes with them.

The Christians of the primitive church believed with their ancestors the Jews, in the eternal unity of the Supreme Godhead, from whom, and dependent on whom are all things that exist\*. They considered Christ Jesus as the image of the invisible God, as the first-born of every creature†, by whom are all things‡; by whose ministry the world and all that it contains was created, and by whom the redemption and salvation of mankind was effected.

The union between the Father and the Son they considered as so strict and indissoluble, that in the language of divines they were described as consubstantial and co-equal. The *word*, or the Son of God, was in the beginning with God, and the *word* was God||. In him (that is, in Jesus Christ) dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily§; through him God was said to be manifested in

\* 1 Cor. xii. 4.

† Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3—5.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 4.

|| John, i. 1. 14. Phil. ii. 6.

§ Col. xi. 9.

the flesh \*; and the different attributes of the Deity were all ascribed to the Redeemer †.

The Holy Ghost, though considered as the spirit, or active essence of the all-governing mind, was yet regarded as a distinct person or character ‡; and was particularly described as such in the celebrated miracle on the day of Pentecost. This unity and co-equality of the three persons or characters of the Godhead was afterwards expressed by the word Trinity, or Trinity in Unity.

The history of the divine mission of Christ Jesus, as related in the Gospels, his incarnation, death, and resurrection, was of necessity regarded as an essential article of the faith of the church.

The general resurrection of the whole human race, and the distribution of eternal rewards and punishments, according to the respective deserts of each individual, constituted another most important article of belief §; since upon this point rests the whole moral obligation of the Christian system.

Among the direct and positive instructions of Jesus Christ, we find none which describe in specific terms that form of government which in fu-

\* 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. i. 8. Rev. i. 11, 12, 13. Rom. ix. 5. Acts, xx. 28. John, xiv. 9. John, x. 30.

† John, v. 19. Rev. i. 18.

‡ *Persona*—*χαρὸς*. 1 Cor. ii. 11. John, xiv. 26. Matthew, i. 18.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 22. Matt. xxv. 31.



ture ages the church was to assume. Perhaps there is no particular form or regimen which would be applicable to all possible states and circumstances; though some form or government is absolutely necessary, since without it no discipline or order could be preserved, and no religion could long subsist. From the very first therefore we find in the church of Christ a regular chain of authority, and subordination. In the appointment of the Twelve Apostles, and in the ordination of the Seventy Disciples, we plainly discern a regular and delegated authority, a constitution and a connected body.

The authority exercised by the Apostles, either collectively, in what may be termed their council or conference, or in their individual capacity, we find from various passages of the New Testament to have been considerable and extensive\*. It

\* Acts, v. 1. vi. 2. xv. 6. 1 Cor. v. 5. 13. 2 Cor. xi. 6. See also the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. After this, how can any man of candour and reflection approve of the rashness of modern innovators; who, when Christ has by his example and precept established order in his church, would throw all into confusion by the destruction of every religious establishment? I would not quarrel with any man upon the question whether the presbyterian or episcopal form of church government was to be preferred; though I myself approve of the latter. But when the reveries of infidels and sectaries extend to the virtual abolition of Christianity, by the abolition of every form of national religion (that is, of national education, for no plan for the moral instruction of mankind can be good without the sanction of a future state), it is impossible not to be disgusted with either the weakness or wickedness of those who entertain such sentiments.

has

has been disputed whether or not the episcopal form was that which was first adopted in the church. It has been said that the office of bishop and presbyter was originally the same ; and that the name of presbyter or elder was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity, wisdom, and delegation. Their number was proportioned to the size of their respective congregations. When, by the addition of new converts, the number of churches and ministers necessarily increased, new regulations became necessary ; one, therefore, from amongst the presbyters, distinguished for his wisdom and piety, was chosen to preside in their councils, to allot to the rest their respective offices, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This dignity was conferred for life, except it was forfeited by some misconduct ; and the presbyter invested with it was generally styled Bishop, and sometimes the Angel \* of the church to which he belonged.

Many circumstances concur to favour this opinion ; but on the contrary it must not be dissimulated that different ranks and degrees appear to have been established from the very first among the ministers of religion. It is impossible to consider the Apostles, or even such eminent persons as Timothy, Titus, &c. as upon an entire footing with the generality of presbyters, or teachers in the

\* Angelos, Gr. (a messenger or delegate). Rev. ii. 3.

different churches. From the Epistles of the primitive fathers, and particularly from those of St. Ignatius\*, it appears incontestably that the church government by the three distinct orders of bishops, presbyters and deacons, was fully established in the course of the first century: as each of these orders is particularly addressed, and as that father does not mention the institution as a novelty, there is the utmost reason to believe that this arrangement was made by the Apostles themselves. It must be remembered that Ignatius was the disciple of St. John, and suffered martyrdom at Rome so early as 107.

The scanty revenues of the ministers arose at first entirely from their share of the *oblations*, or voluntary gifts, which were presented according to the generosity or ability of the congregation. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen from among the presbyters, to preside over the ministerial functions.

There was but one bishop in each church, or rather in each district; but the number of presbyters appears to have been indefinite, probably depending upon the number, the necessities, or other circumstances of the society. Their employments within the church were in general the same with those of the bishops, and they consisted in the ad-

\* Ignat: ad Smyr. 12. Ad Ephes. 20. Ad Mag. 13. Ad Tral. 2, &c.

ministration of the sacraments and the preservation of the discipline of the church. In many churches, however, preaching was the peculiar office of the bishops. The presbyters were chosen by the united consent of their clerical brethren and the people at large, and ordained by the bishop, assisted by the presbyters.

An inferior order of ministers, called deacons, was appointed from the first institution of the church, whose office it was to assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper, to carry the elements to the sick and absent, to receive the oblations of the people, to rebuke those who behaved irreverently during divine service, to relieve the distressed, and to watch over the conduct of the people. In some churches they also read the Gospels, and were allowed to baptize and to preach. The number of these ministers was not limited, but was generally in proportion to the wants of the church. Some, however, after the example of the church at Jerusalem, confined their number to seven; and the church of Rome thought this rule so obligatory, that when the number of presbyters amounted to forty six, that of the deacons was limited to seven.

The order of deaconesses was likewise appointed in the apostolic age. These were generally widows who had only once been married, though this employment was sometimes exercised by virgins. Their office consisted in assist-



ing at the baptism of women, in previously catechising and instructing them, in visiting sick persons of their own sex, and in performing all those inferior offices towards the female part of the congregation, which the deacons were designed to execute for the men.

Such was the arrangement which appears to have been adopted in the primitive constitution of the church. The first century had not, however, elapsed, when an additional order became necessary. The bishops who resided in large and populous cities, prompted by the neighbouring converts, whose attendance upon public worship was always inconvenient, and sometimes impossible, erected new churches in the adjacent towns and villages; which naturally continuing under their care and inspection, the districts grew imperceptibly into ecclesiastical provinces, and obtained the name of dioceses. Over the new churches they appointed suffragans to instruct and govern them, who were distinguished by the name of country bishops\*, and held a middle rank between the bishops and presbyters. The Christian ministers of every rank still derived their support from the voluntary offerings of the people, which, after providing for the expences of public worship, were divided between the bishops and the presbyters, the deacons and the poor.

\* Choro-episcopoi. Some however have disputed whether the institution was known before the third or fourth century.

The first Christian church established at Jerusalem by apostolical authority, became in its doctrine and practices a model for the greater part of those which were founded in the first century. It may easily be conceived that these churches were not superb edifices, purposely erected for the celebration of divine worship. Assembling at first in small numbers, the places where the primitive Christians met for pious purposes, were doubtless sequestered retirements, or the houses of private individuals, which, from various reasons, and by various means, would in time become the property of the community, and be gradually extended and improved. Select portions of scripture were publicly read in these assemblies, which were succeeded by a brief and serious exhortation to the people. The preacher usually delivered his sermon sitting, while the people stood; which was, probably, in conformity to the practice of the synagogue. The prayers, which formed a considerable part of public worship, were repeated after the bishop or presbyter who presided in the service\*. To this succeeded the *oblations*, and the distribution of the Lord's Supper; and the whole service concluded with a social and friendly repast, denominated *Agapæ*, or the feast of love; to which all who were able contributed, and of which all who were willing partook.

\* Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* lib. xiv. 4. Justin Martyr's Second *Apol.* p. 93.

During stated intervals of the time allotted to these services hymns were sung, not by the whole assembly, but by persons expressly appointed for that purpose.

Besides the appointment of the first day of the week, by the Apostles, for the public celebration of religious worship, the first Christians are generally believed to have observed two anniversary festivals; the one in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the other to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost. From the earliest periods of Christianity it however appears, that divine worship was celebrated in a different manner in different places. The external government of the church was accommodated to the different situations and opinions of the first Christian believers; and in those societies which were totally, or principally composed of the Jewish converts, the Jewish Sabbath, as well as the first day of the week, was kept, and much of the Jewish ritual allowed and observed\*. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews, and the congregation over which they presided, united the law of Moses with the doctrines of Christ †.

\* The authority for a permission of this nature might be adduced from the example of Christ, who, in the prayer which is peculiarly named his, has, except in that clause which relates to the forgiveness of injuries, adopted the very words and petitions which at that time were used in the different Jewish liturgies.

† *Pene omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant.* Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. iv. c. 5.

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With respect to the few and simple rites instituted by Christ, it appears, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, by the first Christians, whenever they assembled for the purposes of social worship; and so far from being confined to those who had made the greatest progress in religious attainments, it was equally participated by the Apostle of Christ and the meanest member of the church. The initiatory rite of baptism was publicly performed, by immersing the whole body in the baptismal font, and in the earlier periods of Christianity was permitted to all who acknowledged the truths of the Gospel, and promised conformity to its laws. The introduction of unworthy and disorderly persons into the church, from this easiness of admission, naturally narrowed the terms of communion, and baptism was afterwards confined to those who had been previously instructed in religious knowledge, and proved the sincerity of their professions by the regularity of their lives. The probationers for admission into the society of Christians took the humble name of Catechumens, while those who were already consecrated by baptism were distinguished by the superior title of Believers.

The discipline exercised in the primitive church was strict, and even bordering on severity. Two kinds of excommunication were practised at this early period. By the first, profligate persons, heretics and apostates were separated both from



54 *Discipline of the Primitive Church.* [CENT. I:  
the civil and sacred communion of the church \*, for  
a period of thirty days; to be renewed at the  
discretion of the elders, &c. The other was  
termed *anathema*, or “ the delivering of a con-  
vict to Satan †,” which was a still more com-  
plete exclusion; and it appears that it was thus  
termed, because the offender was in that case  
supposed to be delivered up defenceless to his  
spiritual enemy, unprotected by the prayers of  
the church, or the benefit of the holy sacrament.  
This last species of excommunication was reserved  
for very flagrant and obstinate sinners, generally  
indeed inflicted upon those who were found in-  
corrigible by the former means.

\* Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. v. 7, 9. Tit. iii. 10.

† 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20.

## CHAP. IV.

## OF THE SECTS WHICH EXISTED IN THE FIRST CENTURY.

*Jewish Christians—Gnostics—Cerinthus—Simon Magus and Menander.*

WERE we to expect that so considerable a number of men, as those who embraced Christianity in the first century, would be actuated exactly by the same opinions, we should form an expectation not warranted by our own experience, or the conduct of mankind in every age. The doctrines and precepts of Christianity, so easily to be comprehended and understood, were indeed, at a very early period, blended with the most fantastical opinions. The pure stream of religious truth was polluted by error even during the lives of the Apostles\*. The scrupulous adherence of the Jewish converts to the Mosaical law, occasioned several of them obstinately to contend for the ceremonies of their ancestors, and rendered them desirous of imposing them on the Gentile Christians. A large party separated from the church, and regarded those whom they had been long accustomed to consider as a people rejected by God, with a de-

\* 1 Tim. vi. 20. Col. xi. 8.

gree of contempt and hatred, which naturally produced reciprocal dislike; each indulged dispositions inimical to brotherly love, together with certain peculiar religious opinions resulting from former practices and opinions.

These Judaizing Christians were first known by the general appellation of Nazarenes; but a division of them was afterwards distinguished, though it is uncertain at what time, by the name of *Ebionites*, which according to Origen and Eusebius is derived from *Ebion*, a poor or despicable man, from the mean opinion they entertained of Christ\*. Besides their adherence to the Jewish law, Theodoret ascribes to them other opinions. They contended, it is said, most strenuously for the unity of the Godhead in the person of the Father, and asserted that Jesus was a mere man, born after the common course of nature, of human parents, Joseph and Mary, but that the Holy Ghost descended upon him at his baptism, and continued to actuate and inspire him till his death. They observed both the Jewish and the Christian sabbath.

From the imperfections of the Jewish dispensation, the Gnostics (*wise or knowing*) hastily inferred that it was not instituted by the Supreme Being; and,

\* Orig. de Princip. l. iv. c. 2. Euseb. l. iii. c. 21. Others however assert that this name was bestowed upon them in allusion to the poverty of the sect itself, both as to their temporal condition and that of their understandings. Others again speak of a person of that name as their chief or founder.

assuming that pompous appellation, boasted their ability to restore to mankind that knowledge of his nature which had so long been lost. They blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from the Oriental philosophy. The sages of the East had long expected a heavenly messenger, endued with sufficient powers to release them from their bondage to corrupt *matter*, which they held to be the source of all evil. The miracles of Christ and his Apostles induced them readily to accept him as this heavenly messenger, and they interpreted all the precepts of Christianity in the manner most agreeable to the absurd opinions they had previously conceived. They introduced amongst their followers a multitude of absurd legends respecting the actions and precepts of Christ, and of the creation of the world by inferior beings. These opinions were so entirely dissonant to many parts both of the Old and New Testament, that they rejected much of these books, though they admitted the validity of a few parts. From the belief that whatever is corporeal is in itself intrinsically evil, they denied that Christ was invested with a *real* body, or that he really suffered for the sake of mankind. As the son of the Supreme God, they indeed consented to regard him; but regarded him as inferior in his nature, and believed that his mission upon earth was designed to rescue the virtuous soul from the tyranny of wicked spirits, whose empire he was



to destroy, and to instruct men to raise the mind from its corporeal impurity, to a blessed union with the Supreme God.

Far removed from the path of truth, it is not surprising that, having no certain rule to guide their steps, they should separate, and wander into the manifold intricacies of error. Accordingly, we find the Gnostic heretics were not only divided into many sects, differing in their various rules of religious faith, but in matters which related to practice. Whilst the more rigid sects rejected the most innocent gratifications, that the body might not be so nourished as to degrade the soul; their more relaxed brethren considered the soul as entirely unaffected by the actions of the body, asserted the innocence of complying with every dictate of nature, and abandoned themselves without any restraint to the impulse of the passions. Their persuasion that evil resided in *matter*, led them to reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and their belief in the power of malevolent *genii*, the sources of every earthly calamity, induced them to have recourse to the study of magic to weaken or avert the influence of those malignant agents. A very considerable sect of Gnostics distinguished themselves by the name of *Docetæ*\*, but their peculiar opinions are not accurately known.

\* From *δοκεω* (*dokeo*, Gr., to appear) because they held that Christ suffered in *appearance* only.

Cerinthus, by birth a Jew, was one of the earliest and most distinguished seceders from the church. He allowed indeed that the Creator of the world was the lawgiver of the Jews, and a being endued at first with the greatest virtue, but asserted that he derived his power from the supreme God, and that he had by degrees fallen from his native dignity and virtue. That in order to destroy his corrupted empire, the supreme Being had commissioned one of his *glorious Eons*, whose name was Christ, to descend upon earth, that he entered into the body of Jesus which was crucified, but that the Christ had not suffered, but ascended into heaven.

Cerinthus required his followers to retain part of the Mosaical law, but to regulate their lives by the example of Christ; and taught, that after the resurrection Christ would reign upon earth, with his faithful disciples, a thousand years, which would be spent in the highest sensual indulgencies. This mixture of Judaism and Oriental philosophy was calculated to make many converts, and this sect soon became very numerous. They admitted a part of St. Matthew's Gospel, but rejected the rest, and held the Epistles of St. Paul in great abhorrence.

The Oriental philosophy, that baneful source of prejudice, was so deeply rooted in the minds of great numbers, as to afford a wide extent to the exertions

ertions of imposition or fanaticism. Either deceived themselves by a heated imagination, or desirous to impose upon others, several represented themselves as celestial beings, sent down upon earth to purify corruption and destroy error. Among the most considerable of these impostors were Simon Magus and his disciple Menander, whose pernicious tenets were similar in many respects. Simon, who taught his doctrines about the year 35, asserted that he was the *great Power of God*, that he descended from heaven to deliver man, that he had assumed the human form, and that, though he had apparently suffered death in Judea, he had not in reality. He taught farther, that all human actions are in themselves indifferent, and allowed his followers to indulge themselves in the greatest licentiousness\*. He ascribed to his mistress Helena the production of angels, and to these angels the creation of the world; and composed books for the use of his followers, which he attributed to Christ and the Apostles. Ecclesiastical history presents us with an account of several more absurdities which were blended with Christianity at a very early period. But these different modifications of folly would afford a very tedious and unpleasing, as well as a very unprofitable detail.

\* Lardner's Hist. of Heretics. Euseb. lib. ii. c. 13.

From the review of these absurdities it might be hastily inferred, that since the doctrines of Christianity were so plain and simple as to be comprehensible by the meanest capacity, there must have been some defect either in the conduct of the first teachers of that religion, which prevented their doctrines from appearing respectable to the people, or that they were careless in inculcating them. Neither of these causes, however, prevailed. The zeal and virtue of the Apostles were attested by innumerable witnesses of unquestioned veracity; and by others who were interested in defaming them, since they were the implacable persecutors of Christianity. But besides the proneness to error which is natural to man, let it be remembered, that the Jews had grossly conceived that the Messiah would be a temporal deliverer; and though the Jewish converts could not resist the strong evidence which was presented to them, that Jesus Christ was the predicted Messiah, yet in many of them these carnal ideas would probably at some times recur, and, by temporarily weakening their faith, would dispose them to adopt erroneous opinions. Besides this, their obstinate adherence to the Mosaical rites, necessarily introduced into the church practices very dissonant from the simplicity required by the Gospel. With respect to the Gentile converts, the tenets of the Oriental philosophy concerning the origin  
of



of evil, and the creation of the world by an inferior power, had prepared the minds of many for the reception of the most absurd opinions, which they contrived to unite with the doctrines of Christ.

## CHAP. V.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE FIRST  
CENTURY.

*Little Use made of human Learning in this Century—  
Clemens—Barnabas—Papias—Ignatius—Public Schools.*

THE little assistance derived by Christianity from the wealth or dignity of its first professors has already been observed; nor, if we except the apostolical writings, were the compositions of the Christian writers in the first century so distinguished, either by their number or eloquence, as to force themselves into the notice, or captivate the taste of mankind. The purity of its doctrines, and the virtues of its professors, were the instruments for opening the human heart to conviction, and to the truth of this revelation.

Among the writers of this century, the most distinguished place, after the inspired penmen, is due to Clemens, the friend and fellow-labourer of St. Paul, who describes him as having “his name written in the book of life.” There are extant two epistles to the Corinthians, which are ascribed to him; but the latter is generally reputed not genuine. Clemens Alexandrinus seems to acknowledge only one\*. Eusebius speaks of it

\* Strom. lib i. iv, v, vi.

in the singular. He is mentioned by Irenæus as the third bishop of Rome \*. The epistle, which is accounted genuine is written in a truly apostolic spirit, and with great simplicity of style. Several spurious compositions were falsely attributed to Clemens. Among others, it was asserted that he assisted the twelve Apostles in compiling what are called the Apostolic Constitutions, and in fact acted as their amanuensis. The Constitutions however are, in the judgment of the acute and able Jortin, and in that of other learned men, a despicable forgery.

The epistle ascribed to Barnabas was probably written by an unknown author, who assumed the name of that apostle. Of the writings of Papias, the disciple of the Evangelist John, and the first propagator of the doctrine of a Millennium, nothing remains but the fragments of an historical performance.

The Pastor of Hermas is generally allowed to be genuine, and it is also probable that it was the work of that Hermas who is spoken of by St. Paul, though some have ascribed it to a certain Hermas, or Hermes, brother to Pius bishop of Rome, who lived in the succeeding century. The work is entirely allegorical, consisting of visions and similitudes. Like all works of this nature, it is extremely unequal as a composition, and I con-

\* Iren. lib. iii. c. 3.

feels but little satisfactory to my judgment. It was however in high estimation in the early ages, and is spoken of as Scripture both by Irenæus and Tertullian\*.

One of the most excellent and valuable characters in the latter part of this century was St. Ignatius, the second bishop of Antioch, who, as he is considered as one of the apostolic fathers, is classed in this century, though in reality he did not suffer martyrdom till 107. It is to the disgrace of the otherwise moderate and upright Trajan, that by his sentence this venerable man was condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts at Rome; a sentence which he received without dismay and even with satisfaction. He has left behind him several epistles to the different churches. It has been thought that the shorter epistles bear stronger marks of authenticity than the larger. They were written in his journey from Syria to the Roman capital, with a spirit and force which never deserted him under the insolent treatment of the band appointed to conduct him, and in the prospect of those cruel sufferings which terminated his existence †.

\* De Pud. 10.

† See some excellent critical remarks on the Epistles of Clement, Barnabas, and Ignatius, and the Pastor of Hermas, in Mr. Wakefield's "Inquiry into the Opinions of the Christian Writers, &c."



In our account of authors in this century it would be improper to omit noticing two, who however cannot strictly be classed with the Christian writers. The first was Philo, a Jew, who applied the philosophy of Plato to the illustration of Scripture, and was in high repute with his countrymen.

The other was of the same nation, and, outwardly at least, of the same religion, but still more illustrious as an author. The reader will anticipate the name of Josephus, whose history of the Jews is so universally popular. Being taken prisoner by Vespasian, he was treated with great kindness by that emperor, and seems to have returned the favour by a profusion of flattery. From some slight but respectful allusions to Christianity, however, which appear in his works, Mr. Whiston and other learned persons have conjectured that he was in reality an Ebionite Christian, but cautiously concealed his religion both from the jealousy of his own nation and that of the Romans\*.

Foundations for securing a succession of advocates for the truth, were very early established. Public schools were erected for instructing children in the Christian faith; and several seminaries, upon still more extensive plans, were founded in

\* See Mr. Whiston's very satisfactory defence of the disputed passage of Josephus in which mention is made of Jesus Christ.

several cities ; in which those who were advanced in years, particularly those who were intended for the ministry, were instructed both in divine and human erudition. One was erected at Ephesus by St. John ; another by Polycarp, at Smyrna ; and a third, which far surpassed the rest in reputation, at Alexandria, is supposed to have been founded by St. Mark.

## THE SECOND CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Causes assigned for the rapid Progress of Christianity—Translation of the Scriptures into Latin—Trajan—Platonism—Alexandrian Christians—Origin of Monks—Persecutions—Adrian—Antoninus—Rebellion of the Jews—Martyrs—Inquiry concerning the ceasing of miraculous Powers.*

THE Christian religion, during the first century, had acquired considerable stability and extent. In the second, its conquests became still further expanded. Far from being confined to the poor, the illiterate, or the wretched, who sought in the belief of immortality a refuge from the miseries of life, its truths were received and acknowledged by the rich\*, the accomplished†, and the learned‡. Paganism lamented the desertion of her temples, the neglect of her victims,

\* Plin. Epist. x. 97.

† Aristides.

‡ Justin Martyr. Clemens Alexandrinus.

and

and the increase of a power which threatened her with unavoidable destruction.

Amongst the secondary causes for the success of Christianity, none could be more persuasive, none indeed equally powerful with the marked virtues and distinguished purity of its early professors. Relinquishing the delights and the splendour of vanity, they voluntarily renounced their possessions for the relief of their indigent brethren : but these renunciations, unlike those of the heathen philosophers, were not sacrifices of sensuality at the shrine of pride ; they proceeded from the purest motives, and were performed with the sublimest views. This propriety of conduct, so necessary to the credit and support of a rising sect, was attested by their governors, witnesses of indisputable authority, since they regarded the doctrines of this new religion with abhorrence, and its professors with contempt. The contrast between their resigned and devout manners, and the conduct of the other subjects of the Roman empire during a season of peculiar calamity, is strongly marked by the discriminating and unprejudiced pen of Marcus Aurelius\*. No pretext, except their confirmed abhorrence for the popular superstition, was afforded by them for the persecutions in which they were involved. They could assert with confidence, and the assertion was uncontroverted before

\* Marcus Aurelius rescript. Euseb. lib. iv. c. 13.



the tribunal of their judge, that far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society, from theft, sedition, adultery, perjury, or fraud \*. To their freedom from these vices they added a warm and active charity, charity not confined to the particular society to which they belonged, nor even to the whole Christian community, but extending to all, however different in religious opinions †.

The validity of the Gospel revelation was, even before the end of the first century, submitted to the general consideration of mankind. Nearly the whole of the Scriptures was before that period translated into Latin, a language so well and so extensively known as to be understood even in the remotest parts of the Roman empire. The reception of these sacred books at a period when from their recent dates the truth of every circumstance might be without difficulty ascertained, is one among the numerous proofs of the truth of the Gospel. Nor were the errors of the first sectaries without a beneficial influence upon the Christian church. The Gnostics, who denied any

\* Plin. Epist. x. 97.

† Surely with these virtues, which are acknowledged by Mr. Gibbon, the primitive Christians were not deserving of the censure with which he has loaded them, that of not being desirous of making themselves agreeable or useful in *this* world.

revelation antecedent to that by Christ Jesus, opened a door of communion to the pagan converts, who, with that pride inherent in man, could not at once be made to conceive that they had haughtily rejected a revelation so long and so fully established.

The conduct of the Roman Emperors towards the Christians in the second century, though sometimes harsh and cruel, yet upon the whole was mild and tolerant. The decrees of Trajan respecting them were softened by the counsels and influence of the mild and beneficent Pliny. Their enemies were forbidden to produce any anonymous accusations against them, and they were left at liberty to retire from observation. The number of Gentile converts was greatly augmented, and the Christian church was established in very remote parts of the Roman empire.

It is to be lamented, but must not be concealed, that all the members of this communion were not worthy of the advantages they enjoyed. Greatly enlarged in its numbers, it is not indeed wonderful that some should have been admitted into the Christian communion, whose virtue melted in the intense heat of persecution, or whose piety had been the transient effect of a momentary impression; nor could the defection of such of its votaries have materially injured the Christian cause. But the simple and majestic fabric reared by Christ and his Apostles was in some

degree undermined in its foundation, by the prevalence of an opinion which was disseminated in this century, that the whole duties of religion were not equally incumbent upon all, but that a sublimer degree of virtue was to be pursued and attained by those who in solitude and contemplation aspired to an intimate communion with the Supreme Being, whilst inferior attainments were sufficient for men who were engaged in the active employments of life. In consequence of this absurd opinion, the moral doctrines of Christianity were divided into *precepts* and *counsels*, the former of which distinguishes those laws which are of universal obligation, and the latter those which relate to the conduct of Christians of superior merit and sanctity. These opinions were propagated with great reputation, towards the close of the second century, by Ammonius Saccus, who taught in the school at Alexandria. This person, a professed follower of the Platonic philosophy \*, maintained not merely with the primitive Eclectics, that truth and falsehood were blended in the opinions of every sect, but

\* The Platonic philosophy took its rise, not from the doctrines of Plato, but from the belief of its professors, that the sentiments of Plato respecting the Deity and the invisible world were much more sublime and rational than those of the other philosophers. They professed to search after truth alone, and were disposed to adopt, from every system and sect, such tenets as they thought most conformable to it. Hence they were called Eclectics,

that

that the great principles of all truth, whether philosophical or religious, were equally discoverable in all sects; and that the only difference between them consisted in a different mode of expression, and in some points of little or no importance. By a proper interpretation of these sentiments, he contended that all sects, whether philosophical or religious, might easily coalesce in this universal philosophy which, however then perverted, was the great source of all the religious opinions that prevailed in the world; but that in order to this the fables of the priests were to be removed from paganism, and the comments and interpretations of the Disciples of Jesus from Christianity. He asserted that the errors of paganism proceeded from the symbols and fictions under which, according to the Eastern manner, it had been inculcated by the ancients; that in time these were erroneously understood in a literal sense, whence the invisible beings who were placed by the Deity in different parts of the universe, as his ministers, were converted by the suggestions of superstition into gods, and worshipped as such, though in fact deserving only of an inferior kind of homage. Jesus Christ he considered as an excellent being, the friend of the Deity; but supposed that his design in descending upon earth was not to abolish the worship of dæmons, but to purify the ancient religion and restore the true philosophy, the  
great



great path of truth from which all had wandered, but that his Disciples had manifestly corrupted the doctrines of their Divine Master.

Ammonius adopted the doctrines of the Egyptians concerning the universe and the Deity, as constituting one great whole; the *eternity of the world*, the *nature of souls*, the *empire of providence*, and the *government of the world by demons*. These sentiments he associated with the doctrines of Plato, by adulterating some of the opinions of that philosopher, and forcing his expressions from their obvious and literal sense; and to complete his conciliatory scheme for the restoration of true philosophy and the union of its professors, he interpreted so artfully the doctrines of the other philosophical and religious sects, that they appeared closely to resemble the Egyptian and Platonic systems.

This philosophical system was soon embraced by those among the Alexandrian Christians, who were desirous to unite the profession of the Gospel with the dignity, the title, and the habit of philosophers. The school of Ammonius \* extended itself from Egypt over the whole Roman empire, but its disciples were soon divided into various sects; a certain consequence of that fundamental law, which all who embraced it were

\* The credit of this school was highly advanced by the profound and inventive genius of Plotinus, who disseminated its doctrines in Persia, at Rome, and in Campania.

obliged to keep perpetually in view, *that truth was to be pursued with the utmost liberty, and to be collected from the different systems in which it lay dispersed.* Hence the Athenian Christians rejected the opinions entertained by the philosophers of Alexandria. But all who aspired to rank with the new Platonics agreed in their opinion of the *existence of one God the source of all, the eternity of the world, the dependence of matter upon the Supreme Being, the nature of souls, the plurality of Gods, and the method of interpreting the popular superstition.* The rules prescribed by this sect were extremely austere ; the people at large were indeed permitted to live conformably to the laws of their country, and the dictates of nature ; but the *wise* were enjoined to extenuate by mortification the sluggish body which confined the activity of the immortal spirit, that in life they might enjoy communion with the Deity, and ascend after death, alone and unincumbered, to dwell in his presence for ever.

This philosophy, which involved the truth of the Gospel in subtilty and obscurity, and added to the doctrine of Christ the commandments of men, became in time extremely prejudicial to the Christian cause. It will be easily conceived that these opinions produced in time those voluntary seclusions from the world, which confined or destroyed the utility of a considerable portion of mankind. But its tendency, however injurious, was

was still less pernicious than an opinion derived from those philosophic sects \*, who affirmed that it was not only lawful but laudable to deceive, in order to advance the interests of religion. This detestable sentiment, at first probably very cautiously propagated, and very sparingly used, opened wide the gates of falsehood, and in succeeding ages filled the whole system with absurd legends, pretended miracles, and that train of imposture which, while it disgraced human nature, was dignified with the perfidious title of *pious fraud*.

Notwithstanding that during the greatest part of this century the Christians were suffered to remain unmolested, the sword of persecution was sheathed, but not thrown away; and it was frequently suspended by a single hair over their devoted heads. Their peculiar manners, habits, and the zeal with which they avoided the feasts and solemnities of the pagan worship, were occasions of implacable hatred in their heathen brethren, who regarded them as unsocial and austere, considered their claims to superiority as arrogant, and, from not beholding any visible object of their worship, treated their pretensions to religion as improbable, if not impious. If they withdrew from them the charge of atheism, it was only to load them with the imputation of human sacri-

\* See the arguments of Darius. Herod. lib. iii.

fices \* and incestuous festivals ; to which practices they could alone ascribe their meeting in solitary places, without any of those appendages to worship which they conceived necessary to render their piety acceptable. The humane interference of the benevolent Pliny was insufficient to put an entire stop to the persecutions against the Christians under Trajan ; and in the succeeding reign, Adrian was persuaded to mitigate, but not to abrogate, the penalties enacted against them.

The calamities suffered by the Christians were not entirely owing to the instigations of their pagan adversaries. Their Jewish opponents had the address to increase, if not to excite against them, the popular resentment. The seditious spirit of this people was exerted also with equal violence against the Roman government. They were engaged in several revolts, and repeatedly vanquished ; but so little was their rebellious spirit subdued, that, in the reign of Adrian, they openly assembled in very considerable numbers under

\* The foundation of the atrocious charge of sacrificing children on certain festivals, has been very acutely investigated by some learned men in the last century. Some have supposed it to originate from the baptizing of infants ; but it is doubtful whether any but adults were baptized in the first ages of the church ; and the most probable solution appears to be, that it took its rise from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which the Christians called *eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ*, and which the pagans might understand in something of a literal sense.



one who assuming the title of Barchochebas [son-of-a-star], set himself up for their Messiah, and whom they acknowledged as their king. Their efforts for liberty were however vain. Depressed by all the miseries of war and famine, they were, after a rebellion of four years, defeated by the imperial army. Incredible numbers perished by the sword, or were sold into captivity; their leader, who after his defeat was denominated Barchofbeas [son-of-a-lie], was publicly put to death, and their ancient city razed to its foundations. The Emperor, highly incensed by the repeated seditions of this turbulent people, determined to inflict upon the remaining Jews a severe and continued punishment. For this purpose, after building a new city called *Ælia Capitolina* upon the ruins of Jerusalem, he prohibited the Jews, under the severest penalties, from approaching its precincts. Many of them, however, still remained in Palestine, and it was not till after repeated revolts that they were reduced to subjection.

In the succeeding reign of Antoninus Pius, the disciples of Christ were again involved in a partial persecution in consequence of an earthquake in Asia, which they were accused of having provoked by their neglect of the gods, and their impious refusal to deprecate their wrath. This persecution was however confined to some provinces; and an Apology by Justin Martyr for the Christian Religion, which is still extant, being put into the hands

of

of this excellent monarch, he had the good sense and justice to perceive their innocence, and to publish an imperial edict, prohibiting in future all severities towards them.

Antoninus, it is well known, was succeeded by the celebrated Stoic Marcus Aurelius. During the dawn of his reign the Christians enjoyed the beneficial influence of philosophy ; but it was soon clouded by his avowed dislike, and numbers of both sexes became the victims of a persecution which, though connived at and even encouraged by the most philosophic and accomplished of the Roman emperors, vied in cruelty with that of a Nero.

As the character of the virtuous Trajan is sullied by the martyrdom of Ignatius, so the reign of the philosophic Marcus is for ever disgraced by the sacrifice of the venerable Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, the friend and companion of St. John. A few days previous to his death he is said to have dreamed that his pillow was on fire. When urged by the Proconsul to renounce Christ, he replied—“ Four score and six years have I served him, and he has never done me an injury—Can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour ? ” Several miracles are reported to have happened at his death. The flames, as if unwilling to injure his sacred person, are said to have arched over his head ; and it is added, that at length being dispatched with a sword, a dove flew out of the wound ; and that  
from

from the pile proceeded a most fragrant smell. It is obvious that the arching of the flames might be an accidental effect, which the enthusiastic veneration of his disciples might convert into a miracle; and as to the story of the dove, &c. Eusebius himself apparently did not credit it, since he has omitted it in his narrative of the transaction.

Among many other victims of persecution in this philosophic reign we must also record that of the excellent and learned Justin. But it was at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul that the most shocking scenes were acted. Among many nameless sufferers, history has preserved from oblivion Pothinus, the respectable bishop of Lyons, who was then more than ninety years of age; Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne; Attalus, a native of Pergamus; Maturus and Allexander; some of whom were devoured by wild beasts, and some of them tortured in an iron chair made red hot. Some females also, and particularly Biblias and Blandina, reflected honour both upon their sex and their religion by their constancy and courage.

The cause of paganism, however, gained not much by these cruel executions. The pious lives, the resigned deaths of several of the professors of Christianity in the second century, cried aloud, and the voice was heard. They had embraced the religion of Christianity in the prospect of sufferings and death, and they were supported under

these sufferings agreeably to the promises of the Gospel. The apologies for their religion, which were addressed by several of the Christian writers\* to the Emperors, were appeals to the reason as well as to the humanity of those for whom they were intended. It is indeed probable that some of them were never honoured by the perusal of the monarch. But as they asserted facts, of which all might easily be convinced; as the motives, the sufferings, and the conduct of the persecuted sectaries were by these means more extensively known, it is highly probable that they largely contributed to diffuse the truths of the Gospel. To these causes for the extension of religious knowledge, must be added the forcible argument of miracles, which there is much reason, from the testimony of the writers of the second century, to believe still existed. It does not, indeed, appear at what period of time the miraculous powers which had so greatly assisted the propagation of Christianity were withdrawn, nor is it at all necessary that the precise time should be ascertained. Those who believe that God neither bestows less than is necessary, nor more than is sufficient, will easily conceive, that, when by supernatural means Christianity was widely diffused, and when, from various causes, mankind were disposed to receive the Gospel with less aversion, the powers which

\* Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, Melito, Justin Martyr, &c.



were no longer necessary, were no longer given. Fraud, fanaticism, and credulity, have continued miracles almost to the present time. It appears probable, however, from the silence, or the testimony of the ancient fathers, that miraculous gifts became gradually less frequent, and in a very early period entirely ceased. The same suspicions which have fallen upon the later miracles have justly been applied to the later pretensions to a prophetic spirit. It is, however, probable that the gift of prophecy was conferred, though perhaps in smaller portions, during the second century, as it is mentioned by Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho. To these causes for the progress of religion must be added the labours of several missionaries, who, warmed with pious zeal, journeyed into remote countries for the propagation of truth; among whom was the learned Pantænus, who travelled as far as India\*.

\* Euseb. v. 10.

## CHAP. II.

## OF DOCTRINE, GOVERNMENT, RITES, AND CEREMONIES.

*Creed of the Church in this Century—Corruptions—Simple Structure of the Apostolic Churches—Functions of the Bishops—Metropolitans—Mode of administering the Sacrament—Baptism—Festival of Easter—Christmas—Fasts—Marriage—Ecclesiastical Censures—Controversy concerning Easter.*

CONFINING himself to those obvious rules of faith and practice, which were appointed by Christ, and to the observance of those simple institutions ordained by the Apostles, the primitive believer pursued his way with undeviating steps: and although, as we have already seen, the loquacious and controversial genius of the Heathen philosophy had in the second century made some progress even in the body of the Christian church, still the established creed remained in a great measure undepraved and uncorrupted. In the invaluable remains of Irenæus the bishop of Lyons we find a compendium of the Christian faith, as professed in his time. “The church,” says he, “which is dispersed through the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their immediate disciples, the belief in one God, the Father Almighty, the maker of the heaven,

the earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ; and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made flesh for our salvation ; and in the Holy Ghost, who by the prophets revealed the dispensation and the coming of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, his birth by a Virgin, his passion, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven in the flesh, and his advent from heaven in the glory of the Father to the gathering together of all things, and the raising up of the flesh of all mankind ; that in Christ Jesus our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, of things on earth, and of things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess to him ; and in all things he will execute righteous judgment ; both the evil spirits and the angels who sinned and became apostates, and the impious, the unjust, the breakers of the law, and the blasphemers among men, he will send into everlasting fire ; but to the just, and holy, and to those who keep his commandments, and remain in his love, whether from the beginning, or whether they have repented of their sins, he will give life, and incorruptibility, and glory for ever \*."

The reader will easily perceive that this early creed has served as the basis of that which is now termed the Apostle's Creed, and which was probably compiled and digested in the succeeding century.

\* Irenæus, lib. i. c. 2. p. 50.

From the writings of Justin, Clement, Theophilus, Irenæus, Tertullian and others, we have abundant evidence that the doctrine of the Trinity was strongly asserted by the church in this century against the sectaries of every denomination. It is indeed in this age that the word *Trinity* appears to have been introduced. The fathers of this century in general are equally strenuous in maintaining the other articles of faith, as specified in the preceding extract.

The moral principles of the Christian religion, however, in this century, appear to have suffered some invasion; the text of the Scriptures was attempted in some instances to be accommodated to the immoral practices of the heathens; and the doctrines of different duties being requisite to different orders of Christians, and that it was lawful to deceive in order to advance the interests of religion, were propagated both in the discourses and writings of many of the early professors of Christianity.

It is probable that, in the beginning of the second century, many of the immediate successors and disciples of the Apostles continued to practise those few and simple rules relative to the government of the church, which they had appointed or approved. Those who devolved the care of their churches upon one of the elders, and travelled for the propagation of Christianity into



distant lands\*, would probably endeavour to direct the people to the selection of a person who, at the same time that he was eminently qualified to conduct the worship and concerns of the congregation, would be one whose piety and humility might prevent him from making any innovations upon the simplicity of the apostolic rules. Accordingly we find, at the commencement of this century, that few alterations had been proposed or adopted by the church. The bishops and presbyters were still undistinguished by any superiority of station or difference of apparel; they were still chosen by the people, and subsisted upon a proportion of the voluntary offerings which were paid by every believer according to the exigencies of the occasion, or the measure of his wealth and piety. The bishop, assisted by the presbyters and deacons, to each of whom he distributed their respective employments, superintended and regulated the ecclesiastical concerns of the society. He was the steward of the church; the public stock was entrusted to his care, without account or controul: the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the deacons were solely employed under the bishop in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue. A decent portion of it was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy, a sufficient sum was al-

\* Euseb. lib. ii. c. 37.

lotted for the expences of public worship, and the whole remainder was appropriated to the sick, the aged, the indigent, and the oppressed.

Each Christian society, governed by its own laws, and directed by its own ministers, formed within itself an independent republic, unconnected with its neighbouring state by any other alliances than those of mutual faith and reciprocal good offices. But near the end of the second century the churches of Greece and Asia established, as a custom and a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations at these meetings were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and the utility of them was so apparent, that they were universally adopted by all the Christian churches. The decrees which were enacted there were styled *Canons*, and regarded and regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the church by degrees assumed the form, and indeed acquired the strength, of a great fœderative republic.

It is not to be supposed, in this arrangement, either that the people foresaw the alienation of their rights, or that the clergy looked forward to that power which in succeeding ages was obtained

by the ecclesiastical order. The perfect equality of rank which had subsisted amongst the bishops in these assemblies, was diminished at first, perhaps, by the ascendancy that a strong mind naturally obtains over one which is weaker; and this inferiority was afterwards confirmed by the necessity which arose of exalting one to the office of perpetual president, for the preservation of order in the assembly. The time when this dignity was first conferred is not precisely ascertained, but it is probable not till the middle or towards the close of the succeeding century. It was given to the bishop of the principal city in those provinces where the synods were held, who was honoured with the appellation of metropolitan or primate.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper, which was celebrated whenever the primitive church assembled for the purpose of sacred worship, was administered not only to the meanest, but to the youngest member of the congregation. Its species were common bread and wine, which were consecrated by the prayers of the bishop, or presiding priest. It was given to children under the species of wine, and the observance of it was conceived of such peculiar importance, that it was sent from the society to all the sick or absent members. Baptism was publicly performed twice a year. The catechumens (or probationers for baptism) assembled in the church on the great festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide; and after a public declaration of their faith, and a solemn assurance from their  
sponsors

sponsors that it was their intention to live conformably to the Gospel, they received the sacrament of baptism. This rite was performed by three immersions, and the body was divested of clothes. In order to preserve decency in the operation, the baptismal font of the women was separated from that of the men, and they were as much as possible attended by the deaconesses of the church. Baptism by aspersion was permitted to the sick; and in cases where a sufficient quantity of water for immersion could not be procured. The sign of the cross was made use of in this rite; and a solemn prayer was uttered on consecrating the baptismal water. Confirmation immediately succeeded the performance of this rite\*. The earliest and most express records testify that infant baptism was usual in the church. Parents were originally sponsors for their infant children, and one sponsor only was required. In the case of adults, the sex of the sponsor was the same with that of the person baptised; but in infants no respect was paid to this circumstance†.

It is not easy to determine the period when prayers for the dead began first to be offered up in the Christian church. The first author who mentions this custom is Tertullian. It is highly probable that this practice, which led to

\* Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* xii. 1.

† *Ibid.* xi. 8.



the doctrine of purgatory, was not instituted from any belief of that state; but from a conviction that all men are sinners; to implore the Almighty to deal with them in mercy, not in justice;—to distinguish between the perfections of men; and as a testimonial of their belief in the immortality of the soul, which, however, they conceived to exist in but an imperfect state of happiness, or to have its consciousness suspended till the general resurrection.

It is highly probable that Easter was instituted as a festival from the earliest period in the Christian church; but the first observation of that season is very uncertain. The feast of Whitsuntide\* possibly took its rise in this century, as well as that of Christmas. During the three or four first centuries, the nativity of Christ was celebrated on the sixth day, which is now called the Epiphany, in commemoration of the incarnation; and under this general name were understood both the nativity and baptism of our Lord, till the church agreed to observe the nativity on the 25th of December, when that and the Epiphany came to be considered as distinct festivals. The whole of the time between the celebration of Easter

\* This name is supposed by some to have been derived from its being one of the seasons for baptism, at which time the Neophytes or candidates for this rite wore white garments: but a more probable derivation of the English name is from *wied* (sacred, in the old Saxon) i. e. sacred, or holy Sunday.

and Whitsuntide, which was fifty days, was observed as a festival.

It appears from the authority of a writer of this century, that before its close several fasts were observed by some churches. The apostolical Lent consisted of only a few days before Easter \*, but to this were added the fourth and sixth days of the week; the former on account of the Jews taking counsel together on that day to put Jesus to death, and the latter because on that day he actually suffered. The weekly fasts were commonly observed till the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon, and differed in that respect from the fast before Easter, which lasted the whole day: they were, however, intermitted during the season between Easter and Whitsuntide.

The union between the primitive Christians was so intimate, that it is probable few transactions of importance in their private concerns would take place, without mutual communication. Thus much however is certain, that all who intended to marry acquainted the church with their design before it was completed †. These marriages were preceded by the espousal, which took place a considerable time before the marriage was solemnized, by various ceremonies, and the man presenting his future bride

\* Tertul. de Jejun. c. 14.

† Ignat. Ep. ad Polycarp. n. 5.

with a ring, a practice which was adopted from the Romans. At the appointed time the marriage was solemnized by the priest; the right hands of the contracting parties were joined together; and the bride modestly veiled, after receiving the nuptial benediction, was crowned with flowers\*.

Ecclesiastical censures, which are so necessary for the honour, the order, and even the preservation of a regular society, were publicly denounced against the offender who had relapsed into idolatry, or fallen into gross sin. Whatever his excuses, he was deprived of every part in the oblations, avoided by the whole church, and excluded from the assemblies of the faithful. In vain he implored for re-admission into the society, till he was humbled by a public confession of his sins, and had given solemn assurances of his intentions to conform to the Christian laws, and undeniable proofs of the sincerity of his repentance. Some of the churches which affected great austerity utterly excluded the atrocious sinner, the heretic, or the apostate, from the hopes of a re-admission into their communion. By degrees, however, this severity universally relaxed, and the gates of reconciliation were again opened to the returning penitent, who, by a severe and solemn form of discipline, had expiated his crime, and who exhibited a scene

\* Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* xx. 4.

which

which might powerfully deter the spectator from an imitation of his guilt. The priest who had committed any notorious offence was no more exempted from the discipline of the church than the most obscure sinner. The arms of mercy might again be extended to him, but not till he had first performed the lowest acts of humiliation and abasement ; had complied with the appointed rules for all excommunicants, prostrated himself in sackcloth at the door of the assembly, humbly implored the pardon of his offences, and made a public recantation of his sin. Nor even then was he restored to the honours of which he had been deprived. He was re-admitted indeed, as a member of the general society, but his claim to the honours of the ministry existed no more.

All prayers which were offered on the Lord's day were made in a standing posture, in memory of the resurrection of Christ, except by the penitents \*. Besides the observance of the first day of the week, all Christians agreed in celebrating the seventh, in conformity to the Jewish converts. It was, however, observed very differently from the Christian Sabbath. An observance of the festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide was esteemed incumbent upon all Christians, though they differed materially in the respect they paid to the lesser rites : while some abstained from the flesh of beasts which had been strangled, and from

\* Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* xx. 2.

blood,



blood, others ate with impunity ; while some solemnized the fourth day of the week, in which Christ was betrayed, others observed the sixth, on which he suffered. Nor does it appear that those different regulations occasioned any uneasiness or scandal in the church.

About the middle of this century, a considerable controversy arose between the eastern and western churches concerning the celebration of Easter. The Asiatic Christians, upon the authority of a tradition which derived the custom from the Apostle John, contended for the propriety of observing this institution on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, on which the Jews celebrated their passover, when they distributed a lamb in remembrance of the last supper, and in three days after, they commemorated the resurrection of Christ. This regulation, which confined the observance of this institution precisely to the fourteenth day of the month, be the day of the week what it might, gave much offence to the western churches, who regarded it as extremely indecent to interrupt the solemn abstinence of the great week, and to commemorate the resurrection on any other day of the week than that on which it actually took place. In their turn they pleaded the example of the Apostles Paul and Peter. The arbitrary spirit of Victor, bishop of Rome, prompted him to demand from the eastern churches a compliance with the ritual of the west, and upon

their resolute opposition to his command, to assail them with numberless reproaches, anathemas, and excommunications. A dissension so injurious and degrading to the church was, however, healed by the prudent counsels of some members of the different churches, and each party retained its peculiar practices and opinions during this and the succeeding century.

## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE SECOND  
CENTURY.

*Gnostic Christians—Marcionites—Encratites—Carpocrates—  
Valentinian Heresy—Montanus—Praxeas—Jewish  
Christians—Nazarenes or Ebionites.*

**H**E must be ignorant of the varying dispositions of mankind, who can conceive that the different opinions which divided the professors of the Gospel, during the second century, into numerous sects, can possibly be ascribed to any defect in the doctrines of its divine teacher. Man is continually the dupe of prejudice and error; and the various prejudices of Judaism, oriental philosophy, and paganism, may reasonably be conceived to be almost necessarily blended with the religion of many of the first converts to Christianity.

By far the greater part of the heretics of the second century were Gnostics, and derived their errors from the mixture of Christianity with the oriental philosophy. Their tenets are represented as so many different modifications of that fantastical system. The followers of Saturninus and Basilides, who may be considered as Heresiarchs, and as having reached almost the summit of absurdity, spread themselves over Syria and

Egypt, and propagated the doctrine of a *good* and *evil principle*, which was also inculcated by Bardesanes, a Syrian of considerable abilities. Basilides asserted that two of the Eons which were produced by the Supreme Being, were the parents of innumerable hosts of angels, the inhabitants of three hundred and sixty-five heavens, which were under the dominion of an omnipotent governor named Abraxas. This word was used by his disciples as a mystical term, because it contained numeral letters to the amount of 365. This sectary admitted the validity of the New Testament, with such alterations as he conceived necessary. The condition he required from his followers was a continual silence for five years; a very proper method, as is observed by Le Clerc, to make an experiment of their folly.

The fanciful Cerdon, a native also of the warm climate of Syria, and Marcion, son to the bishop of Pontus, erected on the foundation of the Gnostics a structure of considerable extent. They taught their doctrines conjointly at Rome. To the two principles already admitted by the Gnostics, they added a third, whom they conceived to be the Creator of the world, and the God of the Jews, and asserted that he was in a state of continual hostility with the evil principle, but desirous of usurping the place of the Supreme Being. Mankind, they asserted, was governed despotically by the two former of these beings, but added, that the



Supreme had sent down his own Son for the deliverance of all, who, by self-denial and austerity, sought to obtain that happiness. The followers of Cerdon and Marcion were distinguished by the name of the latter. They entirely rejected the Old Testament, and the whole of the New, except part of the Gospel of St. Luke, and ten epistles of St. Paul, which were greatly interpolated. This sect was diffused, not only through Rome and Italy, but extended itself over Palestine, Syria, and Egypt.

The austerities of the Encratites, the disciples of the learned Tatian, greatly exceeded even those of the Marcionites. They held matter as the source of all evil, and therefore condemned the most innocent gratifications. They were indeed so abstemious as to give only water in the celebration of the Lord's supper. The creation of the world was considered by them as the work of a Deity of an inferior nature to the Supreme Being, and the body of Christ as an appearance, not a reality. Carpocrates, though likewise a convert to the tenets of Gnosticism, was distinguished by manners exactly the reverse of the followers of Tatian. He asserted that good and evil were the mere result of opinion; that faith and charity were alone essential to salvation; and that the passions being implanted in man by the Supreme Being, obedience to their dictates was the duty of all mankind. These opinions, so well calculated to flatter the

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the corrupt propensities of human nature, were extensively received. To these Carpocrates added a disbelief of the resurrection of the body, and many opinions which blended Christianity with Oriental Philosophy. Perhaps this heretic is the first who asserted the simple humanity of Christ, who, he contended, was only distinguished from the rest of mankind by his superior virtue.

Whether we consider the greatness of its reputation, the numbers of its votaries, or the regularity of its system, the Valentinian heresy holds the most distinguished rank amongst those which pervaded this century. Its founder, Valentine, incensed at having been refused the rank of bishop, rejected orthodoxy, and taught his doctrines at Rome, whence they were diffused through Europe, Africa, and Asia. Refining upon the established genealogies of the Eons, he arranged and named them according to his own inventive imagination, and assigned to each his proper situation and employment. A system which consisted only of a certain arrangement of qualities or attributes which composed the Deity, and the inferior beings, admitted of considerable alterations according to the caprice of those by whom it was professed; and amongst the numerous disciples of Valentine there were few who contented themselves with the fancies which were already prepared for their reception.

Montanus, a native of Ardabon, in Mæsia, affected to believe himself the Paraclete or Comforter,

and that he was sent to perfect the moral doctrines of Christ. He made a distinction between the Comforter promised by Christ to his apostles, and the Holy Spirit which was shed upon them on the day of Pentecost, and considered the former as a divine teacher, which character he himself assumed. He and his followers pretended to the gift of prophecy, and extraordinary illumination, and were distinguished by their extreme austerity. Not less averse to the arts which improve, than to the innocent enjoyments which embellish, human life, Montanus anathematized all those sciences which have polished or entertained mankind. Not merely the male, but even the female disciples of this heretic pretended to the gifts of inspiration; amongst whom two ladies of distinguished quality resigned their husbands, and every delightful domestic connection, to preach in public according to the dictates of their prophetic spirit, which was generally exerted in denunciations of woe to the world, particularly to the Roman empire\*. The most celebrated of his disciples was

\* The following remarks of Dr. Priestley upon the Montanists must be received with some grains of allowance, as a particular providence is an essential article of the Christian faith, and consequently the divine influence occasionally exerted upon the human mind. They are however in the main judicious and sensible.

“ That persons of Montanus’s turn of thinking should mistake the natural emotions of their own minds for divine impulses, is not at all extraordinary. This we see to have been the case with persons of all religions, Heathens, Mahometans, and Christians.

was the ingenious and learned, but austere and censorious, Tertullian.

Christians. We find even at this day how unwilling men of good sense in other respects are to give up all idea of supernatural assistance, or of invisible miracles, such as are incapable of any proper proof, especially upon extraordinary occasions. When they see men make great exertions, either in doing or suffering, they are apt to imagine that they have the aid of more power than their own. They are even apt to think so with respect to themselves. The early Christians had this idea with respect to the power of bearing torture in martyrdom, whereas the natural powers of man, and the principles of Christianity, will appear to those who consider the force of them, abundantly sufficient for all that we read of men having borne or done in those circumstances.

“ The opinion of the natural weakness of the human mind, and of the necessity of foreign aid, to produce any thing great or good, is the foundation of all that enthusiasm which, in all ages, and to this very day, has been the disgrace of Christianity. The whole of the Calvinistic doctrine of the *new birth*, or, as it is called, the work of God in the soul of man, is built upon it. It was, in fact, the same ignorance of the powers of nature, and the idea of the perpetual interference of superior powers, in all the affairs of men, which laid the foundation of the whole system of Paganism. Hence the persuasion of the influence of the sun, moon, and stars, in all events, and then that of dead men in the concerns of the living; and hence all the strange rites and ceremonies which have ever been imagined to be proper to gain the favour of those imaginary powers.

“ Where there is this ignorance of nature and of true philosophy, pretences to inspiration will easily gain credit. Thus the violent agitations of the Heathen priests, and the similar ones of the Montanists, of the French prophets, and of the early Quakers, contributed to produce the persuasion of their being under some supernatural impulse; and the same is generally thought in the East to be the cause of the ravings of madmen.



Numerous were the different sects which arose in this century ; but many of them had no other foundation than some variation from the heresies already noticed. Theodotus, a tanner, but a learned and ingenious man, asserted the simple humanity of Jesus Christ ; whilst Praxeas, on the contrary, contended that the union between God and Christ was so intimate, that the Supreme Being had suffered with him. The followers of Praxeas were, in consequence of this opinion, styled Patripassians.

It has been observed that, on the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jewish Christians retired to Pella, a small city of Syria. In this situation, interdicted, along with their brethren of the synagogue, from visiting the holy city, they languished during sixty years in absence from all which their strongest prejudices taught them the most fervently to revere. Wearied at length by a prohibition, which for ever deprived them of the chance of revisiting the object of their dearest hopes, they evaded the law by electing for their bishop, Mark, a prelate of the Gentile race, and abjuring the Mosaical law. Thus they obtained admission into the holy city, and the standard of orthodoxy was again erected at Jerusalem\*. During their occasional absence, the bishop and church of Pella had still retained the

\* It retained, however, the name of *Ælia*, given to it by Adrian, till the time of Constantine.

title belonging to their former situation. A considerable part, however, of the Jewish Christians, still more ardently attached to the Mosaical rites than to Jerusalem, remained behind, and some of them are supposed to have retained the name of Nazarenes, and others that of Ebionites\*, as described in the preceding century. Abhorred and publicly execrated by their brethren of the circumcision for their attachment to Christianity, and despised by the Christians for their prejudices in favour of the Mosaical law, they were peculiarly oppressed and unfortunate.

Traces of this sect appeared so late as the fourth century; they were joined by the Elcesaites, an absurd sect, which grafted many opinions derived from the Oriental Philosophy on this mixture of Judaism and Christianity.

\* It has been contended whether the Nazarenes and the Ebionites were the same, or a different sect. See Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, by the present learned and ingenious Bishop of Rochester.

## CHAP. IV.

## OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN.

*Accession of learned Persons to the Church—Justin Martyr—Polycarp—Irenæus—Clement of Alexandria—Hegesippus—Aquila—Theodotion—Symmachus—Dionysius—Theophilus—Tertullian,—Pagan Writers—Plutarch, Epictetus, Antoninus, Lucian.*

**M**ORE considerable with respect to situation, to numbers, to rank and influence, than their predecessors, the Christians of the second century acquired an important station in the republic of letters, and diffused or defended the truths of Christianity in compositions, which, if not eminently correct, were rhetorical, and, if not peculiarly elegant, were learned, forcible, and manly.

Succeeding ages have beheld with veneration the spirit, integrity, and inartificial eloquence of Justin Martyr. This eminent person was born at Sichem, in Palestine ; and after wandering in pursuit of truth through every known philosophical system, he at length embraced Christianity, and, without laying aside his philosopher's habit, taught the doctrines of the Gospel at Rome. His faith, as we have already seen, endured the severe test  
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of persecution, and he received the crown of martyrdom at Rome.

Of the venerable and excellent Polycarp we have also already spoken. There is an epistle of his to the Philippians inserted among those of the Apostolic Fathers. Its objects are to enforce the moral duties, and to controvert the opinions of the Gnostics. It is generally allowed to be genuine.

Irenæus, the disciple of the illustrious Polycarp, suffered martyrdom about the year 202. This pious and diligent prelate composed several works, of which, however, few remain. Some of the performances of Clement of Alexandria have reached posterity, from which we are justified in believing that his erudition was very extensive, though he is frequently obscure. Hegesippus is placed by Eusebius in the time of Adrian. He was a Jewish convert, and wrote a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles.

The Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew into Greek during this century, by Aquila, a Jewish proselyte, by Theodotion, and by Symmachus, a native of Palestine, from whom the Nazarenes were frequently called Symmachians.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote several epistles to the different Christian churches; but they are no longer extant. The same fate attended the voluminous works of Melito, bishop  
of



of Sardis. Three books against paganism, written by Theophilus the seventh bishop of Antioch, and which appear to have been intended as an introduction to a larger work, were more fortunate. Apolinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, also wrote in defence of the Christian religion. But a still more able defender was Athenagoras; an Athenian philosopher, whose *Prefbia* (or mission) in favour of Christianity, addressed to Marcus Antoninus, is still read and admired.

The most voluminous Christian author of this period was Tertullian, who lived in the latter end of the second and the beginning of the third century. He was by birth a Carthaginian, and possessed all the constitutional fervour natural to the sons of the warm climate of Africa. Disgusted with some affronts he had met with from the ecclesiastics at Rome, and incited by his own vehement and rigid disposition, he embraced the opinions of Montanus, and attacked his adversaries with rather more warmth of temper than strength of argument. He was however learned, acute, and ingenious; but severe, enthusiastical, and rather credulous.

Among the Pagan writers of this century were Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and Lucian; the latter of whom, if he did not favour Christianity, was at least a sceptic with respect to the popular religion of his country. In this age the Sibylline verses were probably forged.

THE

## THE THIRD CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Rapid Succession of the Roman Emperors—State of Christianity under Severus—Persecution—Alexander Severus—Maximin—Philip, and Decius—Decian Persecution—Gallus and Gallienus—Valerian—Persecution—Virtues of Christians.*

AMONG several causes favourable to the diffusion of Christianity, we are, perhaps, not a little indebted to the quick succession of the Roman emperors. The events attending their lives, their deaths, and the artifices of their successors, to obtain the imperial purple, naturally engaged much of the public attention, and suspended the execution of those sanguinary edicts intended for the destruction of the Christians. Several among the masters of the Roman world were also entirely unconnected with their predecessors, unbiassed by their prejudices, and averse to their pursuits. In a race of princes, many of whom were accomplished, benevolent, candid, there

there could scarcely fail to be some who would respect the abilities and virtue even of the men whose religious opinions they did not approve.

A considerable part of the reign of Severus proved so far favourable to the Christians, that no additions were made to the severe edicts already in force against them. For this lenity they were probably indebted to Proculus, a Christian, who, in a very extraordinary manner, cured the emperor of a dangerous distemper by the application of oil. But this degree of peace, precarious as it was, and frequently interrupted by the partial execution of severe laws, was terminated by an edict which prohibited every subject of the empire, under severe penalties, from embracing the Jewish or Christian faith. This law appears, upon a first view, designed merely to impede the further progress of Christianity; but it incited the magistracy to enforce the laws of former emperors, which were still existing against the Christians, and during seven years they were exposed to a rigorous persecution in Palestine, Egypt, the rest of Africa, Italy, Gaul, and other parts. In this persecution Leonides the father of Origen, and Irenæus bishop of Lyons, suffered martyrdom. On this occasion Tertullian composed his Apology.

The violence of Pagan intolerance was most severely felt in Egypt, and particularly at Alexandria; and among many instances of suffering virtue in that city, Eusebius relates one which

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is too extraordinary to be passed over in silence.

Pontamiæna, a woman not less distinguished for her chastity than for her beauty, which was exquisite, was condemned to suffer for her religion. To induce her to abjure her faith she was threatened with prostitution ; but was protected from the insults of the mob by Basilides, a soldier to whose custody she was committed ; and impressed with his kindness and humanity, she promised that after her death she would make intercession for his salvation. Pontamiæna suffered the most cruel tortures, and with her mother Marcella was burned to death, boiling pitch being poured over their naked bodies. After some time the soldier Basilides was apprehended for not taking the military oath, which was considered by the Christians as an act of idolatry ; and being questioned concerning the motives of his conversion, he replied that Pontamiæna had appeared to him in a dream, and had assured him that her prayers for his salvation were crowned with success, and that he would soon be called to enjoy the reward of his virtue \*. The beauty and interest of this narrative are not destroyed, even if we believe the dream of Basilides not to have been miraculous.

A still more shocking scene was acted in another part of Africa. Four young men and two

\* Euseb. Hist. lib. vi, c. 5.



women were apprehended as Christians, and condemned to die. One of the latter, Ubea Perpetua, a young widow of a good family, had a child at her breast; and the other, Felicitas, was brought to bed in prison only three days before her execution. They were, as usual, thrown to the wild beasts; and the two females in particular, after being tossed by a wild cow and horribly mangled, while the milk was flowing from their breasts, expired with the greatest resignation and the most heroic fortitude.

The interval between the death of Severus and the time when Maximin assumed the imperial purple, was a season peculiarly favourable to the Christians. They publicly appeared at court, and composed a considerable part of the household and favourites of the amiable Alexander, being protected by Mammea his mother. The severities they endured from his successor Maximin, were probably to be ascribed more to his displeasure at their attachment to the former emperor, and their having been protected by him, than to their religious principles. From the reign of Maximin to that of Decius, the Christians enjoyed still more favour than they had ever before experienced. The emperor Philip, stepping beyond the bounds observed by Alexander, who had paid divine honours to Christ, and had placed his statue or picture along with those of Abraham and Orpheus, in his domestic chapel, was so strongly and openly  
attached

attached to them, as to have given occasion to the belief that he had fully conformed to the doctrines of the Gospel, and had consented to make an humble avowal of his former guilt, and secretly to implore permission to enter the threshold of the sanctuary. That these opinions were fallacious is in the highest degree probable; but thus much may reasonably be deduced from them, that the clemency of the emperor must have been extremely favourable to the reception of Christianity amongst his subjects, and that the doctrines of the Gospel would probably be embraced by many timid but honest minds, whom the dread of a persecuting tyrant would have prevented from making an open profession of their faith in Christ. The accession of Decius to the imperial throne fatally terminated this state of security and peace; and, during his short reign, the Christians were exposed to greater calamities than any they had hitherto suffered\*. Considerable numbers were publicly destroyed, several purchased safety by bribes, or secured it by flight; and many deserted from the faith, and willingly consented to burn incense on the altars of the gods. The city of Alexandria, the great theatre of persecution, had even anticipated the edicts of the emperor, and had put to death a number of innocent persons,

\* It has been said, and with some probability, that the Christians were involved in this persecution by their attachment to the family of Philip. H.

among whom were some women. The imperial edict for persecuting the Christians was published in the year 249; and shortly after Fabianus bishop of Rome, with a number of his followers, was put to death. The venerable bishops of Jerusalem and Antioch died in prison; the most cruel tortures were employed, and the numbers that perished are by all parties confessed to have been very considerable. Gallus, the successor of the inhuman Decius, continued, during his transient reign of not quite two years, the severities practised by his predecessor.

In 253 Gallus was killed by his soldiers, and was succeeded for a short time by Æmilian, who was also soon massacred, and Valerian chosen in his room. The first years of Valerian were favourable to the Christians; but the emperor was afterwards made the dupe of Macrinus, a magician; and in the year 257 issued severe edicts against the Christians, and numbers were sacrificed in different modes—some were scourged to death, some burnt, and many perished by the sword. In 260 Valerian was taken prisoner by the Persians, and from that period the tranquillity of the church was scarcely interrupted during the remainder of the century.

When we recollect the constancy in suffering which was demonstrated by the primitive Christians, and the ardour with which they pressed forward to receive the crown of martyrdom, we can-

not but be struck with observing those defections from the faith which were so considerable during this century. But prosperity is the touchstone of virtue. Received by great numbers, and among them by many of considerable rank, Christianity was no more obliged for its respectability to the virtues of its professors. The Christians were no longer an obscure sect, who were continually called upon to maintain or defend the doctrines of the Gospel; it was professed by many whose talents, or whose stations, rendered it sufficiently respectable in the eyes of the multitude. Protected by the encouragement of the great, and of several emperors, it no longer required, from those who were willing to embrace its truths, that they should rise superior to temporal suffering: they were no longer a small, but intrepid band, distinguished only for their virtue and courage; they composed part of a great whole; and, enervated by prosperity, and trusting in numbers, they were unprepared for combat, and shrunk from danger.

The degeneracy observable in so large a number of Christians as abjured the faith during the Decian persecution, did not affect the whole body of believers. There were many who braved all the terrors of persecution with undaunted fortitude, and who willingly devoted themselves to the executioner rather than relinquish their faith. During the intestine discords, the wars, the calamities of famine and pestilence which afflicted the empire



under Gallienus, the behaviour of the Christians was distinguished for its exemplary excellence. With the utmost tenderness and compassion, they extended their assistance to the utmost limits of their ability; and acting in every respect in a manner the very reverse of their Pagan brethren, fearless of danger, and intent only upon doing good, they visited the loathsome abodes of infection, and voluntarily shared their possessions with the needy and the diseased \*. Such indeed was the powerful influence of their virtues, that some Goths, who had taken captive several presbyters, were so affected by their piety and goodness, as to become converts to the Christian faith, and to relinquish a part at least of their usual ferocity, for a degree of mildness more suitable to a professor of the Gospel.

\* Euseb. viii. 23.

## CHAP. II.

DOCTRINE, GOVERNMENT, AND DISCIPLINE OF  
THE CHURCH DURING THE THIRD CENTURY.

*Doctrines—Creed of Tertullian—Platonic Christians—Monkery—St. Anthony—Opinions concerning the State of the Soul—Public Edifices erected for the Christian Worship—Encroachments of the Clergy—New Orders of Clergy—Coptiæ—Parabolani—Acolythists—Exorcists—Notaries—Catechumens—Baptism, Confirmation, &c.—Penitential Discipline—Fasts—Accommodation of Christianity to the Prejudices of the People—Mysteries.*

**I**N the history of the preceding century the creed of St. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, which he affirms to have been the general creed of the Christian church, was distinctly detailed. The creed which Tertullian gives as the system of belief in his time corresponds in most respects with that of Irenæus; and it must have been composed at the farthest about the beginning of this century.

“ We believe,” says the father, “ in one God, but under this dispensation (which we call *οικονομία*), that to the one God there is a son, his word, who proceeded from him, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. He, sent

by the Father to a virgin, and born of her, became Man and God, the Son of Man, and the Son of God, and was named Jesus Christ. We believe that he suffered, was dead and buried, according to the Scriptures, and being raised by the Father, and taken up into heaven, that he sits at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. Who sent, according to his promise from the Father, the Holy Ghost, the comforter, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost\*."

The opinions of the Platonic Christians, that the Scriptures were not to be understood according to their literal, but agreeably to their allegorical sense, had at this time deeply pervaded the Christian world. The plainest precepts of the Gospel were supposed to contain some latent meaning, and ample scope was opened to the most absurd and chimerical interpretations. With the opinions, the Christian teachers had adopted the habits and manners of the philosophic schools. They assumed the dress of the pompous sophist, and delivered the plain doctrines of the Gospel with strained and studied eloquence. The belief that solitude, contemplation, and abstinence were necessary to elevate the soul to a knowledge of divine truth, was derived from this philosophy, and was

\* Tertul. ad Prax. c. 2.

earnestly inculcated during this century. One of the first instances which we find recorded of these voluntary seclusions from the common affairs of life, is that of Paul, who retired from the Decian persecution to the deserts of Thebais, where he resided ninety years. His example was not, however, a solitary proof of human folly; many others retired to forests, to caverns, and to dens, where they practised in solitude the most severe discipline, and made pretences, not only to extraordinary devotion, but to extraordinary illumination; and a voluntary seclusion from secular affairs was commonly inculcated as the perfection of piety and virtue. Anthony, whose eventful, if not miraculous, life has been recorded by the pen of Athanasius, retired at a very early age into the Egyptian deserts; and the respect which was paid to his character, and his wonderful relations, greatly contributed to extend the ardour for retirement.

Some new doctrines concerning the state of the soul after death appear to have made a considerable progress during this century. The undistinguished believer was consigned to purification, and the expiation of his sins in a state after this life, and anterior to his participation of the joys of heaven; but the martyrs were supposed to be received to eternal glory immediately upon the dissolution of the body. The annual commemoration of their suf-



ferings and victory was solemnly and fervently observed in the Church\*. In compliance with the superstitions of their Pagan brethren, and with a view to recommend themselves to their favour, the Christians appointed the celebration of these anniversaries on the days † appropriated to Pagan festivals, and introduced into them whatever might captivate the fancy, and recommend these rites to their heathen neighbours.

We have beheld the Christians during the two preceding centuries compelled to assemble in the houses, perhaps, of some of the more opulent of their society, or in some secret and sequestered retreat. In the third century, their appearance became more respectable, and they were either permitted to erect, or connived at in erecting, convenient edifices for religious worship. This season of external prosperity was improved by the ministers of the church, for the exertion of new claims, and the assumption of powers, with which they had not been previously invested. At first these claims were modestly urged, and gradually allowed; but they laid a foundation for the en-

\* A superstitious respect for martyrs probably arose about the time of Polycarp, at whose death we have seen various prodigies were reported to have taken place. Forty years afterwards, this respect had so far obtained, that Tertullian says, We make oblations for the dead, and for their martyrdom, on certain days yearly.

† Greg. Nysson. Opera, vol. ii. p. 1006.

encroachments which were afterwards made upon the rights of the whole Christian community, and for lofty pretensions to the right of supremacy and spiritual dominion. Those lands which were purchased from the common stock for the benefit of the whole, were in time considered as the exclusive property of the clergy, whose rights were represented as superior to the claims of earthly potentates, since they were derived from Heaven, and entailed upon the ministers of religion as the successors of the holy Apostles, and of the Jewish priesthood.

Several alterations in the form of church government appear to have been introduced during the third century. Some degree of pomp was thought necessary to render so singular an institution respectable to the minds of a gross multitude, who are only capable of judging from external appearances. An attention to this circumstance was probably one amongst many causes for appointing new orders of ministers in the church; but Christian societies were not destitute of more cogent reasons. As their numbers increased, their labours became proportionably greater; and it was necessary to provide assistants, and, more agreeable to good order, to assign to each his proper function. Inferior ministers were therefore instituted, who derived their appellations from the offices they fulfilled. The *Copiatæ* or *Fossarii* provided for the decent interment of the dead. The *Parabolani* attended the sick, particularly in

infectious or pestilential diseases. The Acolythists\* were employed in lighting the candles of the church, and attending the ministers during the celebration of the Lord's Supper; and to the Exorcists was assigned the office of praying over possessed persons at such times as no public intercession was made for them; and while they relieved the bodily wants of the miserable sufferer, whose chief residence was in the church, they relaxed his mind by leading him to some useful or innocent employment†. The Notaries were appointed to record every remarkable occurrence relating to the society of which they were members. The institution of this order is ascribed to Fabian at Rome, under the Decian persecution, at which time they were employed to collect the actions and memorials of the martyrs. These ministers probably derived their emoluments, not merely from the precarious bounty of the society, but from a certain proportion of the fixed revenues of the church. The principal of them (no longer obliged to depend upon an uncertain subsistence, which was augmented or diminished according to the zeal or opulence of the community) had obtained, before the close of this century, the possession of several considerable estates, which had been bequeathed or presented to the Church.

The external dignity of the ministers of reli-

\* This was an order peculiar to the Latin Church.

† Bing. Ecc. Antiq.

gion was accompanied by a still greater change in its discipline. The simple rules prescribed by the apostles for the preservation of good order in the Church, branched out into so many luxuriant shoots, that it was difficult to recognize the parent stem. In many societies, all persons unbaptized or excommunicated were considered as out of the reach of salvation. Nor was the sacrament of baptism administered to any till the humble Catechumen had been publicly exorcised, had acknowledged himself under the influence of a malignant spirit, and had submitted to a long preparation. He was then, in the presence of those already initiated, publicly admitted into the Church. This rite was performed in a mode extremely different from that which had been adopted in the two preceding centuries. As the number of converts to Christianity increased, the older Christians, in order more effectually to judge of the religious knowledge of those whom they admitted to communion, very judiciously lengthened their season of probation. The duration of this time differed in different places, and according to the circumstances of the probationers, who, in cases of extreme sickness, or the general conversion of a whole nation, were immediately admitted to baptism. In general, however, a sufficient time was allowed for instructing the Catechumens in the doctrines of religion, who were arranged in different classes, in proportion to the time they had passed in probation, or the

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the progress they had made in religious attainments. The immediate candidates for baptism registered their own names with those of their sponsors in the public dypticks (or registers) of the church, after which they were examined respecting their qualifications. These regulations, which were eminently calculated to exclude unworthy members, were however accompanied by some observances highly fantastical and absurd. The Catechumen was exorcised for twenty days previous to his baptism, in order to deliver him from the supposed dominion of evil spirits, and during that time was prepared by abstinence, the knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, and the Articles of Belief, for becoming a member of the Church. In imitation of the Pagans, the Christians had thought proper to introduce mysteries into the religion of Christ, and the administration of baptism, confirmation, ordination, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Prayer, and a number of other offices, were industriously concealed from the Catechumen. The candidates for baptism were divided into classes; one class was permitted to hear the sermon, but not the prayers of the Church; another was allowed to be auditors of the prayers offered for themselves; a third was admitted to hear the prayers for themselves, and the Energumens (or Demoniacs), and then formally dismissed. The Catechumen not only promised, by himself or by his sponsors, to renounce

renounce Satan and all his works, but accompanied this renunciation by some action expressing his abhorrence of the Devil; sometimes by stretching out his hands, as if to compel his departure, and sometimes by an exsufflation, or spitting, in order to intimate his abhorrence. In the performance of these rites, the face of the actor was directed towards the west, which was considered as the abode of darkness and the emblem of the Devil; while the east was regarded as the region of light, and the rising sun as a symbol of the Sun of Righteousness. This renunciation was succeeded by turning the face to the east, and making a vow to act in conformity to the profession of Christianity, and a public confession of faith. Each of these ceremonies was repeated three times\*. Confirmation immediately followed the reception of baptism. This ceremony consisted in anointing them with holy oil and the imposition of hands; the former of which practices was probably introduced about the beginning of this century; and to this unction was ascribed the effect of confirming the soul in all spiritual graces on the part of God, and the confirmation of the profession of a Christian on the part of man. The invocation of the Spirit in this rite was conceived to add wisdom and strength, to establish men in innocence, as the new birth of baptism imparted innocence and forgiveness of

\* Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq. lib. ii. c. 7.*

sin. White garments were distributed to the Neophytes upon their being baptised, which after being worn eight days were deposited in the church. The believer, who by this rite became incorporated into the society of Christians, was congratulated upon his admission with the kiss of peace, and was presented with a mixture of milk and honey, or milk and wine. After a few other trifling ceremonies, he was permitted to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which began in several of the more opulent societies to be administered with much external pomp. The excessive respect which was paid to baptismal rites was still further augmented by the disputes which arose concerning it during this century, in which the necessity of re-baptizing heretics, who, after their defection, sought for re-admission into the Church, was strongly contended for, and occasioned the convention of several councils, the decrees of which were issued according to the prevailing disposition of the presiding members.

A regular form of discipline began to take place during the third century in every matter which fell within the cognizance of the Church. At this time the penitents appear to have been divided into classes; the first of which were the *Flentes* or Mourners, who were stationed in the avenues to the church, where, in a prostrate posture, they supplicated for permission to perform public penance. After obtaining this request, they received the

title of *Audientes* or Hearers, and had the privilege of entering the church, and of hearing the scriptures and the sermon. The third order were denominated *Genuflectentes* or Kneelers, were allowed to unite in the prayers offered on their account, and stationed in the nave of the church, where they received the benediction of the bishop. The last order was that of the *Consistentes* or By-standers, who were allowed, along with their less guilty brethren, to approach the altar, to join in the common prayer, and be present at the oblations; but they were excluded from a participation of the Lord's Supper. During the season of penitence, the offenders were compelled to appear in sackcloth, or sackcloth and ashes; and in some churches, the men were obliged to shave their heads, and the women to wear a veil, and either to cut off their hair, or wear it in a dishevelled manner, as a token of dejection and repentance. The time which was appointed for penitence was protracted or extended by the bishop, according to the marks of contrition which were distinguished in the penitent, and this was called an *indulgence*. He was invested also with authority to alter the nature of the penance \*. At the close of the Decian persecution, the doors of the church were crowded by suppliants, who, to secure their lives, had consented either to make a tacit renunciation of their faith, by purchasing tes-

\* Bingham, Ecc. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 4.



testimonials from the magistrates of their adherence to paganism, and retiring from observation; or who had reluctantly consented to burn incense, or to offer sacrifice upon the altars of the gods. These apostates were called *Libellatici*, *Thurificati*, and *Sacrificati*. Their success was various; to some the gates of reconciliation were at once opened; against others they were securely closed, and that not always in proportion to the guilt of the offender, but to the accustomed lenity or rigour of the church to which he belonged. A spirited and rigorous controversy arose on this occasion, particularly in Africa, in which the eloquence and the ardour of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, at length prevailed; and it was enacted that those who had obtained testimonials from the magistrates, of having offered adoration to the gods of the empire, should be admitted to a reconciliation with the Church; but that such as had publicly burnt incense should remain in penance, and should not be restored to communion, unless they were in danger of death, and had commenced penitents previous to their sickness. A sentence scarcely less rigid was pronounced against the ecclesiastic who had lapsed into idolatry; he was indeed admitted to hope that in time he might be received into communion with the Church, but he was for ever excluded from all clerical honours. It was, indeed, highly necessary to exhibit such a picture of severity in the Church, and of contrition in the offender,

fender, as might effectually deter his brethren from pursuing his footsteps.

The Apostolical Lent we have already seen was observed only a few days before Easter. In the course of the third century, it extended at Rome to three weeks. It did not stop here; before the middle of the succeeding age, it was prolonged to six weeks, and then began to be called *Quadragesima*, or forty days fast\*. About the time of the Council of Eliberis, Saturday was observed as a day for keeping the lesser fast in some of the western churches, and three days of abstinence were observed in the week. In time, however, the fast on Saturday was observed with greater strictness, and that on Wednesday was wholly disregarded†. On the days of humiliation it was customary to pray in a kneeling posture, contrary to the practice of offering their devotions standing, which was usual at those periods when any joyful event was commemorated, or any festival observed. The increasing passion for austerities, which during this century was so observable, must be ascribed to the increasing belief in the power of malignant spirits, who were supposed to be continually inciting men to the commission of evil, and whose influence was thought to be considerably diminished by abstinence and mortification.

This opinion may easily be traced into the

\* Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq. lib. xxi. 1.*

† Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq. lib. xxi. 3.*

Gnostic philosophy, which insensibly became interwoven with the doctrines of Christianity; but a great number of those rites which were introduced into the discipline of the Church, can only be considered as an accommodation to Paganism. It would be extremely uncandid to suppose, that in the adaptation of these rites, those by whom they were introduced saw the extent to which they would afterwards proceed, or conceived the vast accessions of power and wealth which would accrue from them to the rulers of the Church. Matters apparently trifling in themselves might with propriety be conceded to the prejudices of the multitude, and to the intention of making Christianity more acceptable to the new converts. Many of the Jewish and Pagan proselytes, who were really convinced of the truths of the Gospel, languished in the absence of ceremonies which are naturally adapted to the taste of the unreflecting multitude, while the insolent infidel haughtily insisted upon the inanity of a religion which was not manifested by any external symbol or decoration. In order to accommodate Christianity to these prejudices, a number of rites was instituted; and while the dignified titles of the Jewish priesthood were, through a compliance with the prejudices of that people, conferred upon the Christian teachers, many ceremonies were introduced which coincided with the genius of Paganism. The truths of the Gospel were taught by sensible images, and many of the  
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ceremonies employed in celebrating the heathen mysteries were observed in the institutions of Christ, which soon, in their turn, obtained the name of mysteries, and served as a melancholy precedent for future innovations, and as a foundation for that structure of absurdity and superstition which deformed and disgraced the Church.



## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE THIRD  
CENTURY.

*Manichæans—Noetians and Sabellians—Paul of Samosata—  
Novatians.*

THE catalogue of heresiarchs during the third century is not so extensive as that in the age preceding; but the absurdity of the doctrines promulgated, and the numbers by whom they were received, are at least equally remarkable. In detailing the history of men whose writings the ill-judged piety of their own or succeeding ages has destroyed, and consequently whose opinions and characters have only reached posterity from the suspicious representations of their antagonists, we must however hesitate; and we are bound to weigh every existing evidence before we pronounce a sentence of condemnation. That many absurd tenets were propagated, and that these were departures from the true faith, we have the most undoubted authority for believing: but when we perceive so many seceders from the Church, while they professed themselves the followers of the pure Gospel of Christ, conceiving themselves warranted in the most impious and profligate conduct, we cannot  
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but regard them as under a mental derangement; and therefore rather objects of compassion than condemnation; unless we admit that their tenets have been misrepresented, or at least exaggerated.

The doctrines of self-indulgence have been ascribed as fundamental errors to few or none of the sectaries who arose in the third century. Their manners were in general austere, and their hopes of future happiness greatly dependant upon their rejection of present gratification. Every incitement to pleasure was to be contemned; every allurements of sense was to be avoided and abhorred. One of the most celebrated sectarites of this period was Manes, by birth a Chaldæan, and eminent for his learning, genius, and accomplishments. He was ordained at an early age a presbyter in the Christian Church; and uniting his philosophical doctrines with Christianity, he formed a system compounded of both, which he conceived would meet with a ready acceptance both from the Persian Infidels and the Christians. His success at first was, however, by no means adequate to his expectations. The Persian Christians, offended by his heretical opinions, excommunicated him from the Church; and the Magi were incensed at his attempt to reform the doctrines of Zoroaster. But notwithstanding this opposition, his opinions were received by considerable numbers in Persia, Syria, Greece, Africa, and Spain. They were indeed

so artfully incorporated with the fantastical opinions of several other sectaries, that they found large parties by whom they were at once approved, and afterwards embraced. Manes adopted the mystical language of the Magi, and taught the Gnostic doctrine of two *principles*; the former of which was a living, immaterial *Light*, existing from all eternity, and surrounded by hosts of pure and immortal spirits, the emanations of his essence; the latter an evil power, called *Darkness*, who had resided from eternity in a remote region of infinite space, accompanied by myriads of evil spirits, created out of matter, of which his kingdom was composed. This heresiarch contended that there was a time when these different powers were unacquainted with each other's existence; but that the rebellious powers of Darkness had, during a sedition in their own regions, advanced beyond their own limits, and, on beholding the delightful realms of Light, had projected an irruption into his kingdom. God had opposed to these turbulent spirits the *first man*; but his opposition being too feeble, he had sent to his aid the *living spirit*: a part of the celestial substance however being seized by the dæmons, light and darkness became blended. From this mixture, which was permitted by the Supreme Being, the living spirit separated those parts of the celestial substance which were uncontaminated with matter, and composed from them the sun and moon; and from those parts  
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which were corrupted only in a small degree, formed the planets. The remainder composed this world, where good and evil are ever blended, and incorporated, and which is fitted for the residence of those bodies that were formed by the defeated prince of Darknefs, and endued with a soul composed of those parts of the celestial substance which he had seized. These beings are continually obstructed in their endeavours to be virtuous, by other beings created by the same hand, but containing souls formed from corrupt matter.

This fanciful system was the foundation on which Manes erected a further superstructure. He asserted, that in order to obviate the power of those malevolent spirits who sought the destruction of virtue, the Supreme Being had produced two superior emanations, the Son and the Holy Ghost, consubstantial with the Father, but subordinate to him, the former of whom resides in the sun and moon, the other in the air; where they exert their benign influences upon the bodies and souls of men; but that God sent good angels and prophets upon earth to instruct man, and at length his own Son, who took upon him the exterior, not the nature, of man. That he instructed men in their true origin, the causes of their captivity, and the means of deliverance; shewed them, by his mystical resurrection and ascension, that death destroys not the man, but restores to punished souls the liberty of returning to their heavenly country.



That after death the soul passed into other bodies, till they were either sufficiently purified to pass to the moon, whence after a certain lustration they were conveyed for farther purification to the sun ; or else they were delivered to the dæmons of the air, by whom they were severely chastised, and then were sent to animate other bodies. That when all the parts of celestial substance shall be disengaged from matter, a devouring fire shall burst forth ; the earth shall be cast into utter darkness, where the devils shall dwell for ever, confined with the souls whose indolence has prevented their purification.

Austerity and mortification were the leading features in the characters of the Manichæans. The ecclesiastics and the perfect were strictly prohibited from marriage, and confined solely to the enjoyment of spiritual delights. Every severity which could extenuate and mortify the body was required from all. The fanciful inventor of these fables, after various vicissitudes, is said to have been condemned to a cruel and ignominious death, by the command of the Persian king.

The sects which were founded by Noetus and Sabellius, during this century, have been frequently considered as much alike in their tenets, and the followers of each have been distinguished by the name of Patripassians : but the two sects differed in several important articles. Noetus asserted that the Father had united himself with  
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the man Christ, and was born and crucified with him ; while Sabellius maintained, that the Word and the Holy Spirit were only emanations of the Deity ; and that the former was united to the Son of God, the man Jesus ; and that, having in him accomplished the salvation of man, he had diffused himself on the Apostles in tongues of fire, and was then called the Holy Ghost. Noetus was excommunicated and condemned in the council of Asia.

Though the heresy of Paul of Samosata, the metropolitan of Antioch, appears to have been received by considerably fewer numbers than the opinions of many of the other sectaries ; yet the distinguished rank of this heresiarch, and the vigorous opposition which he made to the decrees of those Councils by which he was deposed, attracted general attention. He asserted the simple humanity of Christ ; but maintained, that the wisdom or spirit of the Father had descended upon him, dwelt within him, and empowered him to work miracles and instruct mankind. The splendor of this prelate's appearance vied with that of a monarch ; and the levity of his manners, it is said, his ambition, and the arrogance with which he propagated his opinions, were as generally detestable as the doctrines which he taught\*. Several

\* As we have our accounts of Sectaries only from their adversaries, we must always admit with great caution the representations

veral councils were convened on this occasion, and by their decrees Paul was degraded from the episcopal dignity; but under the protection of the queen of Antioch, he continued to enjoy the emoluments of his station during four years. It is certainly to the credit of Paul to have possessed the patronage and favour of so distinguished a character. The court of Palmyra was the resort of all the learned; and is consecrated to the latest ages by the presence of the incomparable Longinus, who possibly might imbibe his taste for the Hebrew and Christian writers from the conversation of this distinguished sectary. The defeat of Zenobia was, however, a prelude to that of Paul. The contending parties agreed to submit the decision of their cause to the emperor Aurelian, by whose sentence the rebellious prelate was deposed. The separatists who followed Paul assumed the appellation of Paulians, or Paulianists.

The followers of Novation, a presbyter of the Church of Rome; and of Novatus, a presbyter of Carthage, were distinguished merely by their discipline; for their religious and doctrinal tenets do not appear to be at all different from those of the Church. They condemned second

which are transmitted to us, particularly with respect to the private characters of heresiarchs, &c. As however history furnishes us no better materials, it is only fair to exhibit all we know of them, constantly keeping this caution in our view.

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marriages, and for ever excluded from their communion all those who after baptism had fallen into this sin. They affected very superior purity; and though they conceived a sinner might possibly hope for eternal life, they absolutely refused to re-admit into their communion any who had lapsed into sin, and separated from the Church of Rome, because the members of it had admitted into their communion, many who had during a season of persecution rejected the Christian faith.



## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
THIRD CENTURY.

*Origen—Cyprian, bishop of Carthage—Gregory Thaumaturgus—Dionysius of Alexandria—Methodius of Tyre—Porphyry—Serapion—Minucius Felix—Julius Africanus—Hesychius—Lucian—Pamphilus, &c.—Apostolical Constitutions—Longinus—Dion Cassius.*

THE industry, the erudition, and the accomplishments of Origen justly entitle him to the most distinguished place amongst the Christian writers of the third century. His attention to the Sacred Scriptures was early and indefatigable; but though the principal, they were not the only objects of his studies: he was conversant in philosophy and polite literature, published several doctrinal and moral treatises, and entered the field of controversy with vigour and success. The number of his literary performances exceeds that of any other Christian writer in the early ages, and is indeed very considerable. He composed Commentaries, Scholia, and Homilies upon the Bible, parts of which still exist; treatises upon prayer, and on the principles of religion; and eight books in defence of Christianity against the attacks of Celsus, which are still extant, and are invaluable.

His Hexapla was a performance of perhaps more utility than labour : it consisted in placing the Greek versions of the Septuagint, of Symmachus, and of Theodotion, against the text in the Hebrew. His greatest work was, however, the conquest of every corrupt propensity. His virtue, his humility, and his amiable manners, together with his eminent abilities, have for ever secured to him the veneration and regard of posterity, though they were insufficient to preserve him from the hatred and calumnies of his contemporaries.

Of such men, every action of their lives, every circumstance in which they are concerned, is interesting. The self-denial so remarkable in Origen, throughout the whole of his life, was observable at a very early period. His father suffered martyrdom under Severus ; and the entreaties and even compulsion of his mother were barely sufficient to prevent her son, who was then only a youth of seventeen, from suffering in the same cause. When prevented, he wrote to his father, earnestly exhorting him to persevere in the faith, and cautioning him against the entreaties of his adversaries, though the support of his wife and seven children depended upon his life. His zeal for the truth appears to have been unaffected and unvarying, and the whole of his life to have been employed for the promotion of virtue. Much of it was passed in indigence ; and though his virtues

tues had attracted the notice of Mammea, the mother of the Emperor, he died destitute of common conveniences. His early station was that of a teacher of grammar ; he was then chosen to fill the chair of the Alexandrian School, and contributed in a high degree to extend the reputation of that seminary. He was not, however, suffered to enjoy this situation in tranquillity : he incurred perhaps the envy, certainly the resentment, of Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, by whom he was excommunicated, expelled from his home, and deprived of his rank as presbyter. His active endeavours to promote Christianity rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the Pagans ; in the Decian persecution he endured imprisonment, torture, and chains. He was at length delivered from persecution, and died under the reign of Gallus.

The character of Origen, though uncommonly exalted and amiable, was not without a few dark shades. Charmed with the subtleties of the Platonic philosophy, he blended it with Christianity ; and maintained that the Scriptures were not to be literally, but allegorically explained. The celebrity of Origen, which continually increased, extended this mode of explanation to perhaps a culpable excess, till it became almost general. Charitable and generous to others, his rigour and self-denial were likewise carried to an extreme which proved prejudicial to his constitution, and  
which

which in one instance in particular extended to absurdity \*.

Cyprian, who in the year 248 attained the episcopal See of Carthage, acquired a degree of admiration and applause from his contemporaries, which has not been denied to him by posterity. Affable, virtuous, and charitable in his private character, he was zealous, spirited, and active in his public station, and possessed all those qualities which are calculated to attach friends, and excite the jealousy of adversaries. He had attained to manhood, and been some years a teacher of rhetoric, before he embraced Christianity; and his conversion from Paganism, and zeal for Christianity, had made him so highly obnoxious to the people, that in the Decian persecution he was repeatedly demanded by them; and must have been sacrificed to their resentment, had he not secured his safety by a prudent retreat. In this concealment, impervious to all but a few of his faithful friends, he contrived to regulate all the affairs of his church, to which he returned at the close of the persecution. He then entered into a spirited controversy with Stephen bishop of Rome, concerning the propriety of re-baptizing heretics. The haughty prelate insisted with extreme arrogance, that baptism administered by those who had se-

\* Strange that Origen, who was disposed to turn every thing in Scripture to allegory, should have interpreted the most allegorical expression in it literally! H.



ceded from the Church was perfectly valid; but he was resolutely opposed by the inflexible Cyprian, who asserted, on the contrary, that baptism performed by heretics was null. How far each party was right in this question, it is not the object of the present work to determine. The conduct of Stephen during the time of its being agitated, was, however, extremely insolent. The severe edicts of Valerian, which were particularly directed against the ministers of the Christian Church, were fatal to the devoted Cyprian: he was first banished to Bitha, where he resided some time, and in the following year was recalled to Carthage, where he was confined to the narrow limits of his own garden. Still inflexible in the faith, he refused to purchase life by sacrificing to the heathen gods. He was then condemned to be beheaded; and the cheerful piety with which he encountered death, together with the virtues of his life, occasioned a general lamentation for him, both among his Christian and Pagan contemporaries. Many of his literary performances related to the discipline of the Church, and are, together with a considerable number of moral and theological treatises, composed in a style uncommonly animated and pious. His desire of being rhetorical has, however, and with some reason, subjected him to the charge of turgidity.

Gregory bishop of Neocesarea, and Dionysius bishop of Alexandria, were both disciples of Origen,

gen, and each of them among the number of those who retired from the Decian persecution. The miracles which were ascribed to Gregory, and which obtained for him the sur-name of *Thaumaturgus*, have bestowed upon him a degree of celebrity which he would never have derived from his few literary productions. Those fragments which remain of the works of Dionysius, are not without a considerable degree of ingenuity and learning; they are chiefly controversial, or relating to discipline. The literary abilities of Methodius bishop of Tyre are principally remarkable from the celebrity of his antagonist, the learned and sophistical Porphyry, a Syrian, of the school of Ammonius, who attacked the doctrines of Christianity in a voluminous and elaborate work, which was destroyed by an edict of the Emperor in the following century. Amongst the lesser writers were Serapion bishop of Antioch, Minucius Felix, who openly attacked Paganism, and Julius Africanus, a man not destitute of erudition; but the greater part of whose performances are lost. Copies of the Septuagint were diligently corrected by several different writers, possessed of abilities very adequate to their task: amongst these were Hesychius, the martyrs Lucian and Pamphilus, and Pierius, who obtained the name of the younger Origen.

The Apostolical Canons and Constitutions, works which it has been pretended were composed by the Twelve Apostles conjointly with St. Paul, and copied

copied by Clemens, who acted as amanuensis upon the occasion, have been supposed by some ingenious critics to have been fabricated in the third or fourth century. They affect to establish several points relative to discipline, which were not mentioned in the New Testament. The Constitutions appear to be a compilation of old treatises, which convert Christianity into a mere ceremonial law. The eighth book has been ascribed to Hippolytus, an Arabian bishop, who composed a work called *The Apostolical Tradition concerning Ecclesiastical Offices*, and who has been supposed the compiler of the Constitutions which he published at Rome\*. The honour of this imposture has not, however, remained with the good prelate, but has been bestowed upon many.

Amongst the profane authors of the third century, Longinus the rhetorician, and the historian Dion Cassius, are justly entitled to the most distinguished rank.

\* Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq.* xiii. 5.

## THE FOURTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Diocletian—Gallerius Cæsar, his Hatred to the Christians—Persecution—Fire in the Imperial Palace—Christians protected in Gaul, under Constantius—Death of Gallerius—Constantine the Great—Luminous Cross—Constantinople—Devotion of Constantine—Sons of Constantine divided in their religious Sentiments—Julian—His Bigotry—Jovian—Valentinian—Gratian—Theodosius—Divisions in the Church—Conversion of Armenia—Ethiopia—Georgia—Goths—Laws of Constantine.*

THE events of the fourth century hold a distinguished rank in the annals of the Christian faith. During this period the truths of the Gospel were publicly received, and professed by a succession of the great masters of the Roman world. Christianity became the established religion of the empire; and, in consequence of the contests between the Orthodox and Arian parties, the primitive faith of the Church was nicely ascertained, and delivered to posterity in precise and

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determinate terms. No longer abandoned to the suggestions of fancy, the Christian professor was expected to conform to that rule of faith prescribed by the great leaders of the Church, or compelled to relinquish his title of an orthodox believer in Christ.

The tranquillity which, after the Decian persecution, had with little interruption soothed and recruited the Church, continued during eighteen years of the reign of Diocletian, who assumed the imperial purple in the year 284. In this prosperous season, the Christians publicly professed their religious sentiments, and were joined by numbers so considerable, as to require an addition of several more edifices for the performance of public worship \*. The professors of the Gospel were openly received at court, and their opinions were embraced by the favourite domestics of the monarch, through whom they were exonerated from making their appearance at the heathen sacrifices; a test which had been before considered as incumbent upon all persons who were possessed of places of power and trust †.

But

\* The increase of Christianity may be calculated from that of the Church of Rome, which possessed, in the preceding century, one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, and ninety-four of the inferior orders of ecclesiastics. Before the Diocletian persecution, the churches in that city were augmented to forty and upwards. Optat. de Schism. Donat. lib. ii. p. 40.

† Euseb. lib. viii. c. 1. It is difficult to reconcile the account  
Eusebius

But this halcyon calm was rudely interrupted. Gallorius Cæsar, whose hatred to the Christians had already been manifested by his requisition that they should renounce either their religion or his service, had the address, by fictitious oracles, to terrify and irritate the timid and credulous mind of the Emperor against his Christian subjects. Returning victorious from the Persian war, he urged his importunities with accumulated force; and after spending a winter at Nicomedia with Diocletian, in which the extermination of the Christians was the object of their consultation, he obtained an edict, enjoining that the churches and writings of the Christians should be destroyed; all their civil rights and privileges annulled; and that no pretence nor rank, however exalted, should be sufficient to excuse them from punishment\*. The day previous to the appearance of this edict, the persecution commenced by the demolition of the principal church, which in a few hours was razed to the ground. Alarmed and irritated at these proceedings, the edict, which was placed in the most conspicuous part of the city, was instantly destroyed by a Christian, who paid for his temerity

Eusebius gives of this general tranquillity in the Church, with the martyrdoms which are believed at this time to have taken place in Gaul. It is however probable, both that the narration of these sufferings may be exaggerated, and that the historian confined his description to the eastern parts of the empire.

\* Lactant. de Mort. Perf.

by being roasted alive. Galerius, whose rancour to the Christians could be gratified by nothing short of their total extirpation, and whose short-sighted policy did not enable him to perceive that slower and more insidious measures were more calculated to undermine the constancy of the Christians, and destroy their cause, than those violent methods which animated them to action and resistance, had recourse to new projects. A dreadful fire, which raged in the imperial palace, was attributed to the Christians, who (in order to produce a confession of their guilt) were destroyed in considerable numbers, with every refinement of torture which cruelty could suggest. Some were broiled to death on gridirons, after being cruelly scourged, and their wounds washed with brine; others were thrown to wild beasts, and others starved to death \*. The effort was, however, ineffectual; and amongst the various causes assigned for this conflagration, perhaps the most probable is, that it was the act of the crafty and sanguinary Galerius.

This catastrophe was succeeded by numerous edicts against the Christians; and a furious persecution raged throughout the empire †, except in the provinces of Gaul, under the government of Constantius, the father of Constantine, who protected their persons, though he per-

\* See Euseb. l. viii. He was an eye witness of the cruelties exercised at Tyre.

† Lactant. de Mort. Perf.

mitted the demolition of their churches \*. During a series of years these sanguinary edicts were enforced or suspended according to the caprice of the several masters of the Roman world, or as their recess from the public concerns of an empire distracted by civil commotions afforded them leisure. Great numbers of the Christians suffered the severest tortures in this persecution; though the accounts given of it by succeeding historians are probably exaggerated †. There is, however, sufficient of well authenticated facts, to assure us amply of the cruel and intolerant disposition of the professors of pagan philosophy. The human imagination was indeed almost exhausted in inventing a variety of tortures. Some were impaled alive; others had their limbs broken, and in that condition were left to expire. Some were roasted by slow fires; and some suspended by the feet with their heads downward, and a fire being made under them, were suffocated by the smoke. Some had melted lead poured down their throats, and the flesh of some was torn off with shells; and others had splinters of reeds thrust under the nails of their fingers and toes. The few who were not capitally punished, had their

\* In Galliis (says Lactantius) Constantius Chlorus parietes qui restitui poterant dirui passus est; verum autem Dei templum, quod est in hominibus, incolume servavit. H.

† The account of the Thebean legion, consisting of more than six thousand men, who suffered martyrdom by the orders of Maximian, rests upon feeble and hearsay evidence.



limbs and their features mutilated. It would be endless to enumerate the victims of superstition. The bishops of Nicomedia, of Tyre, of Sidon, of Emesa; several matrons and virgins of the purest character, and a nameless multitude of plebeians, arrived at immortality through the flames of martyrdom.

Wearied at length with contention, or moved by the excruciating anguish he himself suffered from a dreadful and loathsome disease, Gallorius indulged his Christian subjects in a transient respite from their sufferings; which were, however, renewed by his successors, and continued, though with some intermission and mitigation, till the year 325, which restored tranquillity to the Church, and invested Constantine with the sole dominion of the Roman world.

It is well known that Diocletian, as well as his coadjutor in the empire Maximian, abdicated the empire. This transaction was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion, and the Roman world at one period was administered by six emperors. The rival princes, however, gradually fell before the united arms and superior fortune of Constantine and Licinius; and the former, impatient of a partner in the throne, turned at length his arms against the unfortunate Licinius, who was the last competitor that opposed his greatness, and the last captive that adorned his triumph.

No character has been exhibited to posterity in lights more contradictory and irreconcilable than that of Constantine. Christian writers, transported with his profession of their faith, have perhaps magnified his abilities and virtues to excess, and thrown an almost celestial splendour over every part of the portrait; while the Pagan historians have spread their gloomy shades upon the canvas, and obscured every trait that was great and amiable.

The precise date of the conversion of Constantine is, by the disagreement of the respective historians of that period, involved in considerable difficulties. The miraculous circumstances with which it was said to have been accompanied, are attended with almost insuperable doubts to a sceptical mind. His father, Constantius, had shewn himself very favourably disposed to the Christian cause, and Constantine gave early indications of a desire to protect and favour its professors. In the commencement of his reign he granted free toleration in religious concerns to all the subjects of his empire, and a full restitution was commanded to be made to the Christians; but at the same time he liberally enriched the temples of the gods, and publicly worshipped at their shrines. A luminous cross inscribed with the words *By this conquer*, which, when Constantine was about to engage Maxentius, (one of the rival emperors), was seen in the air by the Emperor and his assembled army; and a dream, in which the author of our religion appeared to confirm the prognostic of the luminous phenome-

non, have been generally considered as the causes of his conversion \* ; but it has been objected, that after the date of this event, Polytheism was equally with the Gospel of Christ protected by the master of the Roman world. Great efforts, indeed, and extraordinary abilities, are necessary to throw off at once opinions which have been sanctioned by long use and early prejudices. The political situation however of Constantine was probably not such, while he was shackled with

\* The truth of this fact rests upon the testimony of Eusebius, who declares that it was imparted to him by the Emperor himself. The miracle has been contested by many acute and judicious writers ; and perhaps, as a miracle, the fact is scarcely to be contended for. But if even the miraculous part of the narrative be given up, there appears no reasonable ground to impeach the veracity of the historian. In those regions, so fertile in atmospherical phenomena, nothing is more probable than that in some of the marches of Constantine, a parhelion, or some appearance, might present itself, which by a slight exertion of the imagination might be converted into a cross, with at least the initial letters of the supposed inscription. We know to a certainty, that it was customary not only among the Pagans, but among the professors of a sounder faith, to pay great attention to the appearances of the heavens. However, therefore, Constantine himself might be disposed at the time to doubt of the miracle, there would scarcely fail to be some superstitious persons in the army who might be more credulous. After the devout feelings of Constantine, however, had increased with his years, he might be inclined to give fuller credit to a prodigy which made a considerable impression on a part of his army, and might relate it to Eusebius as an extraordinary at least, if not a miraculous fact. See however the learned and ingenious Dissertation of my estimable friend Mr. Henley at the end of this Volume.

coadjutors,

coadjutors, and labouring up the steep of ambition to the summit of human authority, to enable him to make an open profession of his conversion. Of the sincerity of his attachment to the religion of the Gospel there cannot be a doubt, since it even degenerated into superstition. His temper indeed was naturally mild and tolerant \* ; and if he embraced Christianity with the true spirit of the Gospel, his not persecuting the Pagans is the worst argument that could be produced to prove the insincerity of his conversion †.

So early as the year 313, an edict was issued from Milan by the joint emperors Constantine and Licinius, which may be considered as highly favourable to the Christians, since it authorised every subject of the empire to profess either Christianity or Paganism unmolested; it also secured the places of Christian worship, and even directed the restoration of whatever property they had been dispossessed of by the late

\* A pleasing instance of the tolerant spirit of Constantine is preserved by Socrates. Having summoned Acesius, a bishop of the Novatians, to assign his reasons for his dissent; when the bishop had urged what he thought necessary in his own defence, the emperor replied:—"Set up your ladder then, Acesius, in your own way, and go to heaven upon it alone." Soc. l. i. c. 10.

† Mr. Gibbon, with his usual consistency, insinuates that Christianity was one of the causes which contributed to the fall of the Roman empire; and yet would wish his readers to believe that the conversion of Constantine was entirely political, on account of the maxims that religion inculcates.

persecution.



persecution \*. The abdication and death of his colleague, which left Constantine in the undisturbed possession of the dominions of Rome, was soon followed by circular letters from the Emperor to all his subjects, exhorting them to an immediate imitation of the example of their sovereign, who had embraced the divine truths of the Gospel. He removed the seat of empire to Byzantium, which he embellished, enlarged, and honoured with his own name, and prohibited by a severe edict the performance of any Pagan rites and ceremonies throughout the city †. His religious zeal augmented with his years; and towards the close of his life several imperial edicts were issued for the demolition of the heathen temples, and the prevention of any sacrifices upon the altars of the gods; whilst the reality of his religious ardour was testified by every external observance which could demonstrate his conviction of its truths, and his zeal for its propagation. Without having received the initiatory rite of baptism, or having been placed in the rank of a catechumen, Constantine performed many of the solemn ceremonies appointed by the Church; he fasted, observed the feasts in commemoration of the martyrs, and devoutly watched during the whole night on the vigils of

\* Euseb. l. x. c. 5.

† Soz. lib. ii. c. 3. This is confirmed by Eusebius and Orosius, but denied by Zosimus.

the saints. In his last illness, he summoned to the imperial palace at Nicomedia, several Christian bishops, fervently requesting to receive from them the sacrament of baptism, and solemnly protesting his intentions to spend the remainder of his life as the disciple of Christ. Eusebius, bishop of that city, administered to him the sacred rite \*; and the emperor expired, after a short illness, on the 22d of May, in the year 337, aged 64.

The prosperity and happiness of Constantine were only interrupted by the theological animosity which divided his Christian subjects, and which the well-meant efforts of the emperor were insufficient to compose. The account of these contests belongs to a different section of our history †; but it is necessary to mention that the schism of the Donatists, and the still more fatal Arian controversy, which involved the Christian world in contentious disputes concerning the person of Christ, distressed the mind of the monarch, and disturbed the tranquillity of that scene which he had flattered himself was to close with triumph the evening of his life.

The Christian Church was protected and supported under the dominion of the three sons of Constantine, who, with very inferior abilities, divided and governed the Roman world. The religious

\* After baptism, he laid aside entirely his purple and regal robes, and continued to wear a white garment till the day of his death. Euseb. Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 62.

† See Chap. 3. of this Century.

opinions of Arius, which had occasioned such violent dissensions in the Church, were warmly espoused by Constantius, while Constantine and Constans, who ruled the western parts of the empire, were zealously engaged in the orthodox cause. After a dreadful scene of fraternal contention, Constantine and Constans were removed by death, and the imperial sceptre was again grasped by one hand, and that the hand of a professed friend to Christianity. But the unhappy disputes concerning the person of Christ, which disturbed the peace of every member of the Church, left them not in a situation to enjoy that blessing which had so ardently been wished for by their predecessors in the faith. The Arian party obtained the vigorous support of Constantius; and the venerable professors of Orthodoxy were involved in calamity and opprobrium, and by threats and punishments were exhorted to violate their integrity, and to embrace the opinions of the emperor and the court.

Julian, the nephew of Constantine, who on the death of Constantius ascended the imperial throne, was a steady and insidious enemy to the Christians, whose faith he had abjured, and whose professors he detested and despised. Affecting a liberality of sentiment which extended to every thing within its reach, he avoided an open persecution of the Christians; but his attacks were artfully directed to undermine the very foundations of the Church.

Church. To effect this, he strictly prohibited the Christians from teaching philosophy, and the liberal arts; destroyed the privileges which had been granted to their society; and exhausted all his powers of wit and sophistical ingenuity, to exhibit them in a ridiculous and contemptible light. The deserted temples were once more opened for the reception of the multitude, and Polytheism reared her unnumbered heads in every part of the empire. To gratify his rancour against the Christians still more, the emperor protected and favoured the Jews, and resolved to rebuild their temple at Jerusalem. This attempt served only, however, to afford a further testimony to the truths of the Gospel predictions; for, considerable balls of fire are affirmed to have repeatedly issued from the foundations, and destroyed the artificers, who, after several attempts, were compelled to desist from their purpose. Had the apparently moderate measures of Julian been directed to an impartial toleration of all religious systems, much praise might be due to a man, who, though mistaken in a very important point, possessed the principles of benignity and candour; but his rancour towards the Christians was marked and extreme: he industriously fomented the disturbances by which they were separated, and plundered the magnificent church of Antioch. The disgraceful feelings of revenge instigated him to oppose a religion, which had been so highly indebted for its establishment



ment to a predecessor whose memory he detested. There were, doubtless, many traits of a superior understanding in Julian; but his philosophy was disgraced by a servile attachment to popular applause, by profound dissimulation, and by a superstitious regard to magic; the certain proof of an unenlightened and contracted mind. There is the utmost reason to believe that the emperor's hatred to Christianity would have been still more apparently displayed, had he not perished in the Persian war, in the second year of his reign.

The death of Julian restored to the Church a protector in the person of the emperor Jovian, who was raised by the suffrages of the army from a private station to the imperial throne. Jovian had scarcely assumed the purple, before the religious commotions, which during the short reign of his predecessor had secretly heated the contending parties, burst forth with added impetuosity and strength. Every contender hoped to find in the emperor a protector, who, while he elevated their opinions into notice by his own profession, might blast and crush those of their opponents. He embraced the cause of *Consubstantiality*, but without persecuting the *Arians*. His successor, *Valentinian*, pursued the same line of conduct, and was actuated by sentiments of liberality and toleration, never experienced by his brother *Valens*, who severely persecuted the *Consubstantialists* in the eastern division of the empire. They again obtained

tained an ascendancy under Gratian, and Theodosius the great ; the latter of whom conceived the romantic project of healing all further division, by a convention of all the jarring sects, in which the subtleties of these mysteries might be discussed, and the truths of religion defined and established.

On a cursory review of the events of the fourth century, it might be conceived, that however it had been afflicted by the severe persecution under Diocletian, the general state of the Christian world must have been more prosperous and happy than at any preceding period. Openly professed by the emperors, established as the religion of the empire, and the interests of the Church by every possible means extended and enlarged, we should naturally expect that this would have been the golden period of the Christian Church ; and that its professors, too near the fountain-head of truth not to imbibe the pure and unpolluted stream, and firmly secured in the possession of their divine rights, would have enjoyed in tranquillity and innocence those blessings which their progenitors had looked for with anxious wishes and trembling hopes. But the unhappy disputes which had arisen concerning points difficult to be understood, involved them in domestic evils, scarcely less pernicious to their prosperity and peace, than the edicts of the persecutor or the sword of the tyrant. The Consubstantialist, who believes Christ to be of one or the same substance with the Father, beheld with haughty contempt,

contempt, or indignant scorn, the person and the followers of the presbyter Arius, while the Arian returned his disdain with implacable animosity\*. The historian Sozomen draws a very favourable picture of the general conduct of the clergy during this period †. The bishops, he says, were men of exemplary characters; and the zeal and virtues of the presbyters were such that they conciliated more and more the affections of the people, and gained converts from paganism every day. As the Church however increased in numbers, we are authorized to believe that its native purity became in some degree contaminated. Calamity and opposition too are favourable to the promotion of virtue; many of the professors of Christianity would naturally lose, in ease and security, a part of that integrity which distinguished them in the crisis of danger and of contest; and the stock of piety would be little augmented by those converts, who now professed Christianity, not from a conviction of its truths, but either from an indifference to any religious system, or a fashionable compliance with the faith of the court. The Diocletian persecution was

\* G. Nazianzen laments that the kingdom of Heaven was converted by discord into the image of chaos, of a nocturnal tempest, and even of Hell itself. G. Naz. Orat. i. p. 33.

† The testimony of Julian himself is equally express in favour of the morals of the Christians, and particularly of the Clergy, and ascribes to this circumstance the progress of that religion. Mr. Gibbon, against the clearest light of historical evidence, has endeavoured to traduce the Christians.

preceded

preceded by considerable depravation of manners; and before that had abated, the Church was a sufferer from internal dissention, from the cabals of ambitious members, and from schism even amongst the reputed orthodox. From the year 330 to that of 370, the Persian Christians underwent a series of great sufferings, in which considerable numbers perished; and their calamities were renewed towards the close of this century. Many bishops and other pious persons were sacrificed in this cruel persecution.

The extraordinary pains taken by Constantine for the propagation of evangelical truth, were attended with uncommon success. It cannot be doubted but a multitude of nominal professors, influenced by the example and authority of the emperor, would enter into the Church. But its limits were extended to remote nations. The inhabitants both of the Greater and Lesser Armenia boasted the having received Christianity soon after its promulgation; but in this century the monarch Tiridates, with his court, publicly professed the truths of the Gospel, and established the Armenian Church.. The Abyssinians, or Ethiopians, received the faith from Frumentius, a zealous Egyptian, who, after being consecrated by Athanasius at Alexandria, returned to Abyssinia, and officiated as the bishop of that country. Iberia, or Georgia, received also in this century the Chris-



162     *Excellent sense of a Gothic Bishop.* [CENT. 4:]  
tian faith. Before its close, a considerable number of the warlike Goths enrolled themselves under the peaceable banner of the Gospel; and their progress in Christianity was considerably increased by the zeal and abilities of their bishop Ulfila, who translated the Scriptures into their language, after having previously formed an alphabet for their use, composed upon the model of the Latin and Greek characters. It is said, that in this translation Ulfila omitted the Book of Kings, that he might not increase, by the account of their achievements, the too prevalent passion for war in this fierce nation.

The benignant effects of the mild and equitable doctrines of the Gospel upon the happiness of mankind, must have been strikingly evinced during this century by the Christian world. That humane and equitable dispensation, which provided for the happiness of all mankind, breathed its spirit into the laws of Constantine. Many of the evils, and much of the duration of slavery, were abolished by that monarch, who also softened the rigour of punishments; prohibited sanguinary and ferocious spectacles to the people; prevented oppression, and provided for the necessities of the poor; restrained the licentiousness of divorces, and the custom of exorbitant interest for money. Whatever were the corruptions which had been introduced into Christianity, the professors of the  
Gospel

Gospel were still distinguished by their peculiar virtue, and, in the famine under Maximin, were remarkable for exertions of compassion and charity, unknown to the votaries of Paganism\*.

\* Euseb. lib. ix, c. 8.

## CHAP. II.

OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, DOCTRINES, RITES,  
AND CEREMONIES, IN THE FOURTH CENTURY.

*Emperor declared Head of the Church—Constantine assumes the Title of Bishop—Bishop of Rome—Of Constantinople—Power and Revenues of Bishops—Commutations at Rome on the Election of a Bishop—Popular Elections discountenanced on account of their pernicious Effects—Metropolitans—Bishops—Functions of these different Orders—Revenues of the Church—Tithes—Defence of Tithes—Ecclesiastical Councils—Council of Nice—Attempt to impose Celibacy on the Clergy—Heresy of Arius condemned—Disputes concerning the Hypostatic Union—Council of Constantinople—Provincial Councils—Nicene Creed—Corruptions and Superstitions—Increased Veneration for Saints and Martyrs—Relics—Absurd Fictions—Discovery of the real Cross—Monks—St. Anthony—Their Fanaticism extended to the Female Sex—Hilarion—Basil—Ambrose—Martin of Tours—Different Orders—Cœnobites—Eremites—Anachorites—Sabbatites—Splendid Churches—Laudable Zeal of Constantine—Military Chaplains—Antiquity of the Right of Patronage—Rights of Sanctuary—Liturgies—Discontinuance of the Agapæ—Festivals in Honour of the Martyrs—Abuse of the Sacraments—Abuse of Abstinence—Penance—Confession—Anecdote concerning the Cause of its Abolition—Festival of Easter established—Release of Prisoners at Easter—Manumission of Slaves.*

THE Church, which had received so many advantages from the conversion and protection of Constantine, cheerfully submitted to acknowledge the emperor as its supreme head, who chose

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chose to unite the office of sovereign pontiff with the imperial dignity. No very material change appears to have resulted from this appointment. In some cases he corrected its abuses, in others extended its powers. Whatever respected the possessions, the reputation, the rights and privileges of the clergy, he regulated himself. Every thing relating to religious controversies, to the forms of divine worship, to the vices of the ecclesiastical orders, or the offices of the priests, was submitted to the bishops, or to the consideration of councils. Constantine assumed to himself the title of bishop\*, and regulator of the external affairs of the Church; and he and his successors convened councils, in which they presided, and determined every affair relating to discipline. The limits of episcopal power were, however, never exactly defined between the emperor and the clergy, and in some instances were so much involved, that each party frequently encroached upon the confines of the other.

The claims of superior antiquity had placed the bishop of Rome at the head of the clerical order, and he maintained his pretensions to superiority by immense splendour and magnificence. His authority had, however, before the close of the fourth century, a formidable rival in the bishop of Constantinople, who, in the council convened at that city, was elevated to the second clerical rank



in the empire. From this period may be dated that contention and rancour which long existed between these two contending rivals, and which at length ended in a final separation between the Greek and Latin Churches.

The extensive power and revenues of the bishops in the principal sees, offered too potent a temptation to ambition and avarice, for clerical integrity always to resist. Hence arose considerable contests for the attainment of vacant sees; and every artifice of flattery and dissimulation was occasionally practised to ensure the approbation of the multitude, whose suffrages were taken in the election of their ministers. One melancholy instance of clerical depravity, which took place in this century, may serve as a specimen of that departure from primitive virtue which marked the conduct of considerable numbers. In the year 336, the vacant see of Rome was, by the greater part of the clergy and people, conferred upon Damasus; and this choice was confirmed by his being regularly ordained by the bishops. The artful Ursicinus had, however, by various intrigues, obtained ordination to the see of Rome from some other bishops, and prepared to take possession of what he chose to consider as his right. This gave rise to a furious contest, in which both parties proceeded to blows, and even to bloodshed and murder. The banishment of Ursicinus was not sufficient to appease this tumult. His adherents re-  
fused

refused to communicate with Damasus, and were also banished; but soon returned with their factious leader, and excited fresh commotions. The council of Aquileia solicited the emperor again to banish the turbulent prelate; but it was not till after several years that Damasus obtained the peaceable possession of his see.

The powers which had been possessed by the people in the election of their ministers, became productive of great scandals in the Church, and were at length withdrawn. Those of the presbyters soon followed. They were not however lost: the bishops usurped many of the privileges with which the presbyters had been formerly invested, and the emperor and magistrates obtained many of the rights which had belonged to the religious community. The bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and some others, assumed powers, superior to the other metropolitans, who were invested with the government of one province only; and the jurisdiction of the bishops differed according to the different extent of their respective sees. The mode of establishing the bishops in their functions and offices was one great object with the famous council of Nice. It was determined there, that every bishop should be ordained or consecrated by three bishops of the province, and that his election should be confirmed by the metropolitan\*.

\* Soc. Hist. l. i. c. 11.

In the reign of Constantine, the government of the Church was as far as possible arranged conformably to the government of the State; the bishops corresponded to those magistrates whose jurisdiction was confined to single cities; the metropolitans to the proconsuls, or presidents of provinces; the primates to the emperor's vicars, each of whom governed one of the imperial provinces. Canons and prebendaries of cathedral churches took their rise from the societies of ecclesiastics, which Eusebius bishop of Vercell, and after him Augustin, formed in their houses, and in which these prelates were styled their fathers and masters\*.

The revenues of the Church were secured by the edict of Milan. Whatever had been lost by the persecution of Diocletian was restored, and the establishment continued to be supported by voluntary oblations, long after Christianity became the religion of the emperor and the empire. Constantine, moreover, granted to his subjects the full and free permission of bequeathing their possessions to the Church; and by this measure fatally encouraged a practice which, while it filled the ecclesiastical treasury, left the weeping widow and the defenceless orphan to penury and distress, to a dependance upon their kindred, or upon the alms of the ecclesiastical body. But the riches of the clerical profession were also considera-

\* Priestley's Hist. of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 242.

bly augmented by the emperors themselves. Constantine bestowed upon the churches in every city, a regular allowance of corn for the purposes of charity, and the no less grateful present of considerable allotments of land.

The institution of tithes is also generally believed to have taken place in the fourth century. Those who object to this mode of payment assert, that as tithes were not the original maintenance of ministers under the Gospel, they ought not now to be allowed. To this objection the following answers of bishop Carleton have been returned. First, that tithes were paid to the Priests and Levites in the time of Christ and his Apostles; and the synagogue must first be abolished, before the practice could be properly introduced into the Christian Church. Secondly, during the times of the New Testament, and for some time after, there was an extraordinary maintenance by a community of goods, which supplied the want of tithes; but this community was extraordinary, and not intended to be a permanent institution. Thirdly, the payment of tithes, in that situation of the Church, was so incommodious and cumbersome, that it could not well have been practised; and therefore, as circumcision was laid aside, while Israel travelled through the wilderness (not because it was unlawful, but inconvenient), so the use of tithes in the time of Christ and the apostles, was laid aside, not because it ought not, but because it could



could not be practised : and as circumcision was resumed as soon as the state of the people could bear it, so was the use of tithes in the Christian Church. For tithes cannot well be paid, except where a whole state or kingdom has received Christianity, and where the magistracy are favourable to the Church\*.

From the powers with which the ministers of religion were invested, it may naturally be inferred, that different kinds of ecclesiastical councils must necessarily be established. The first species of these consisted in an assembly of the bishop and presbyters of a particular city, or district ; and the regulation of the ecclesiastical affairs within their jurisdiction, was the professed subject of deliberation. The second was composed of the bishops of several provinces, whose deliberations were directed to the concerns of the provincial churches, the forms of divine service, and religious controversies. The œcumenical or general councils were convened by the Emperor alone ; in which the rulers of the Church in every part of the empire were required to attend. The first general council was called by Constantine, A. D. 325, at Nice, in Bithynia ; in which three hundred and eighteen bishops are said to have complied with the imperial summons, and the whole number of attending ecclesiastics has been computed at two thousand and forty-eight persons. During the

\* Bingham, v. 6.

meeting of this venerable synod, which lasted two months, the Emperor frequently took a seat in the assembly, and even a part in the debates. In this council, the doctrines of Arius were condemned. Jesus Christ was declared to be of the same essence with the Father. Arius was banished to Illyria, and his followers compelled to assent to the confession of faith composed by the synod. Several other regulations took place concerning the powers of the Clergy, and the discipline of the Church. An attempt was made in this council, to insist upon the perpetual celibacy of the clergy, which was opposed by Paphnutius, an Egyptian bishop, individually uninterested in the event, as he had always continued unmarried. The suggestions of this prelate were seconded by the decrees of the Fathers of the Nicene council. The Homoousian faith, or the doctrine of Consubstantiality \*, was accepted by all the members of the synod, except Eusebius of Cæsarea, who yielded a reluctant and ambiguous compliance. The bishops also in general cheerfully submitted to the decrees of this council: the most eminent of its opposers was Eusebius of Nicomedia, who, after three months of wavering, was exiled and disgraced †.

Another

\* That is, that Jesus Christ is of one substance with the Father.

† The following is Dr. Priestley's account of this famous council:

“ On the day appointed for the holding of the council, the bishops

Another council, which was held at Constantinople in the year 383, has, but with little propriety,

bishops and all the inferior clergy above-mentioned, were assembled in the largest room in the palace, rows of seats being placed on each side of it; and all having taken their places, they waited standing in respectful silence for the Emperor, who, being preceded by several of his friends, at length made his appearance, as Eusebius says, like an angel of God, exceeding all his attendants in size, gracefulness, and strength, and dazzling all eyes with the splendour of his dress; but shewing the greatest humility and modesty in his manner of walking, gesture, and behaviour. Having taken his station in the middle of the upper part of the room, near a low chair that was covered with gold, he did not sit down till the Fathers desired it.

“All being now seated, the bishop, says Eusebius, whose place was the first at the right hand of the Emperor (meaning, it is probable, himself) rose; and addressing the Emperor, gave thanks to God on his account, probably congratulating the Church on its prosperous condition, brought about by his means. Then he sitting down, the Emperor himself addressed the company in Latin, expressing his happiness in seeing them all met on so glorious an occasion as the amicable settlement of all their differences, which, he said, had given him more concern than all his wars; but that all these being at an end, he had nothing more at heart than to be the means of settling the peace of the Church; and he concluded with expressing his earnest wish that they would, as speedily as possible, remove every cause of dissension, and lay the foundation of a lasting peace. What he said in Latin was interpreted to the Fathers in Greek.

“Immediately after this speech, this excellent Emperor was witness to a scene which must have afforded him a very unpromising prospect as to the success of his project for peace. For before they entered upon the discussion of any thing that related to the great object of their meeting, the bishops began with complaining

priety, obtained the name of a general council; since the bishops of the eastern provinces alone presided

plaining to the Emperor of each other, and vindicating themselves; but of what kind these mutual accusations were, our author does not say, but only that to every thing that was said the Emperor gave a patient hearing, and that by his mildness, and great address, speaking to them in Greek (which he was in some measure able to do), he at length prevailed upon them to come to an agreement, not only, adds our author, with respect to their private differences, but also with respect to the two great objects of their assembling, viz. the rule of faith (meaning what related to the Arian controversy) and the time of celebrating Easter. This implies that the Emperor attended all the debates of the council, which continued a considerable time, and that he took an active part in them.

“ Socrates says, that the bishops, having put into the Emperor’s hands written libels, containing their complaints against each other, he threw them all together into the fire, advising them, according to the doctrine of Christ, to forgive one another, as they hoped to be forgiven themselves. Sozomen says, that the bishops having made their complaints in person, the Emperor bade them reduce them all into writing, and that on the day which he had appointed to consider them, he said, as he threw all the billets unopened into the fire, that it did not belong to him to decide the differences of Christian bishops, and that the hearing of them must be deferred till the day of judgment.

“ When the chief subject, for the decision of which they were assembled, came to be debated, the principal persons who appeared on the side of Arius, who was also present himself, were Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nice, and Maris of Chalcedon; and the person who chiefly opposed them, and who will make a great figure in the subsequent part of this history, was Athanasius, then only a deacon in the church of Alexandria, but much confided in by Alexander the bishop.

“ According



presided in it, and the Romish Church rejected their canons. Though their creed, which added to that of the Nicene council more precise terms to express the divinity of the Holy Ghost, was accepted by the western clergy, still the bishop of Rome could ill digest the canon which assigned to his brother of Constantinople a degree of rank only inferior to his own, and which, with his peculiar advantages, might tend to raise him to an equality with himself.

It would be an endless and a useless task to specify all the different local or provincial councils which were held in this century. They were commonly summoned as the different parties of Orthodox or Arians happened to be predominant; and had for their objects the deposing of bishops, or the censuring of obnoxious opinions.

It has been already remarked, that during the fourth century, the doctrines of the orthodox were more fully investigated, and accurately defined, than they had been in the preceding period. All who asserted with the schismatic Arius, that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he was created out of nothing, or that he was of a

“According to Philostorgius, Alexander bishop of Alexandria, and Hosius of Corduba (who is well known to have been in the good graces of the Emperor) meeting with some others at Nicomedia, settled among themselves, that in the ensuing council, Christ should be declared to be *consubstantial* with the Father, and that Arius should be banished.” Priestley’s Hist. of the Church, vol. ii. p. 41.

different

different substance from the Father, were solemnly anathematized by successive councils, and declared the enemies of God. The term Consubstantialists was conferred upon the opposers of the Arian doctrines by the council of Nice, the object of whose assembling has been already specified. In this council, the Homoousian doctrine, or consubstantiality of the three persons in the Godhead, was declared a fundamental article of the Christian faith, and has been received as such by the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant churches. Too fatally addicted, however, to verbal disputes, many of the orthodox party were for a considerable time divided concerning the term *hypostasis*, which had been used in explaining the nature of the Trinity; and while some considered it as declaratory of one *person*, others contended for its signifying one *nature* in the Godhead. The use of this word was afterwards restricted to *person*, and the distinction of two entire and perfect natures in Christ, was fully proved and established. These doctrines concerning the nature of the Trinity, which in preceding ages had escaped the vain curiosity of man, and had been left undefined by words, and undetermined by any particular set of ideas, excited considerable contests through the whole of this century. The Semi-Arians violently attacked the divinity of the Holy Spirit, which was in the general council of Constantinople discussed and defined, and the doc-

trine of Three Persons in one God, established as the orthodox belief of the Church.

The following may be considered as an exact summary of the orthodox faith at this period. It is a translation of the *Nicene Creed*, as it stands in the Epistle of Eusebius to the Cæsareans, in Athanasius's Epistle to Jovian, &c.

“ WE believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
 “ maker of all things visible and invisible. And  
 “ in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the  
 “ only begotten ; begotten of the Father, that is,  
 “ of the substance of the Father. God of God,  
 “ Light of Light, true God of true God ; begot-  
 “ ten, not made, consubstantial with the Father,  
 “ by whom all things were made, things in hea-  
 “ ven, and things on earth ; who for us men, and  
 “ for our salvation, came down, and was incarnate,  
 “ and became man, suffered, and rose again the  
 “ third day, and ascended into the heavens, and  
 “ comes to judge the quick and the dead : and in  
 “ the Holy Ghost. And the Catholic and Aposto-  
 “ lic Church doth anathematise those persons, who  
 “ say, that there was a time when he the Son of  
 “ God was not ; that he was not before he was  
 “ born ; that he was made of nothing, or of ano-  
 “ ther substance or being ; or that he is created, or  
 “ changeable, or convertible.”

But whatever might be the advantages derivable from this precision respecting doctrines, many of the practices encouraged by the Christians of the  
 fourth

fourth century were far from conducing either to piety or good morals. Superstition assumed the venerable form of Religion ; abstruse and fanatical explanations of Scripture bewildered the imaginations of the multitude ; and Christianity was defended, not with the invincible arm of simplicity and truth, but by the glittering and brittle weapons of sophistry and invective. An increasing veneration for saints and martyrs was greatly promoted, not only by the Christian emperors, who erected superb churches over their remains, but by the exhortations of the fathers of the Church, who inculcated the belief of extraordinary miracles performed by their relics ; and incited a degree of worship towards those departed saints, whom they represented as interceding with God in favour of those by whom they were invoked. About the year 386 the piety of considerable numbers of the people consisted chiefly in the carriage and preservation of bones and relics ; and extraordinary revelations were pretended to have been made from heaven, for the discovery of the remains of celebrated martyrs to the faith. Their bodies had commonly been secretly interred, by the pious zeal of their followers, in some obscure place ; whence, after the persecution ceased, they had been brought forth, and decently buried. This custom, in some measure, gave rise to the *translation of relics*, which was still farther advanced by a conformity to the practices of the Pagans, who carried about the



images of their gods with great solemnity. Constantine commanded the bodies of St. Andrew and St. Luke to be conveyed away from the sepulchres where they were deposited, to the magnificent church at Constantinople, which he had dedicated to the Twelve Apostles. The remains of St. Stephen, after they had remained buried and unknown more than three centuries, were said to have been revealed by Gamaliel, the tutor of St. Paul, to the favoured Lucianus, a priest, and being discovered in the place to which he had directed the search, were removed with the utmost solemnity to Jerusalem; where they became so celebrated from the miracles they were said to have performed, that many devout visitors to Jerusalem enriched their native cities, on their return, with small portions of these surprising remains. An oratory, or chapel, was always erected over this sacred deposit, which was called a memorial of the martyr whose relics it contained. The tomb of our Saviour at Jerusalem was held in great estimation, and was resorted to by crowds of pious visitors, who carried away with them large portions of *holy earth*, which was highly prized. One of the most extraordinary discoveries of this century was that of the cross on which Christ had suffered; which was said to have been found by Helena, the mother of Constantine, on her visit to the holy sepulchre. Whatever may be the real history of this transaction, whether any discovery was made, or whether Helena was a dupe

or an associate in finding out this treasure; thus much is certain, that pieces of this precious wood were distributed throughout the Christian world, and the cross, according to the testimony of Saint Paulinus, containing a vital virtue in an inanimate and insensible substance, yielded, and continued to yield almost daily, its precious wood to the desires of an infinite number of persons, without suffering any diminution, or appearance of having been touched\*. A degree of respect not less superstitious than that paid to the wood of the cross, was demonstrated by Constantine towards the image of Christ, which he commanded to be made of the most precious materials, and to be placed in the most superb apartment of the imperial palace†. The invocation of saints arose in this century, and may probably have originated from apostrophes to the martyrs to the faith, similar to those which occur in the funeral orations of the Heathen poets and orators.

The belief of a state of temporary punishment after this life, in some respects analogous to the notions of purgatory entertained by the modern catholics, had been inculcated by Origen in the preceding century, and was insisted upon in this by Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, and some other of the Christian teachers. Gregory conceived with Origen, that the wicked, after remaining a sufficient

\* Tillemont, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. c. 5.

† Vit. Constant. lib. iii. c. 49.

time in that place of suffering to be purified from sin, would obtain mercy from God, while Ambrose contended for the eternity of punishments in certain cases.

Another branch of superstition which daily increased was monkery, the actual establishment of which is to be dated from the fourth century. There were, indeed, several solitaries who, like Paul of Thebes, in the preceding ages, had sequestered themselves from the employments of social life; but the Egyptian Anthony, already mentioned, appears to have been the first who induced any considerable number to associate with him in the monastic state. Numbers, seized by a fanatical spirit, voluntarily inflicted upon themselves the severest sufferings, and were content to be deprived of every earthly good \*. In this solitary state, like their leader, the illiterate Anthony, they rejected learning as useless, if not pernicious, and professed to be solely occupied in silence, meditation, and prayer. When, however, they were formed into regular societies, they employed some part of their

\* Ammon, one of the fathers of the Egyptian monks, by the entreaties of his friends, consented to marry a young virgin. On the evening of their nuptials, he conducted her into their wedding-chamber; where, taking up St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, he expounded to her the Apostle's admonition; and so effectually exhibited to her all the pains and inconveniences to which married women are peculiarly exposed, that she consented to elope with him to the deserts, and to lead a monastic life. Soc. lib. iv. c. 23.

time in study. Their melancholy modes of life prepared and qualified them for all the vagaries of a heated imagination : they had prophetic dreams, saw visions, conversed with the different inhabitants of the invisible world, and many closed a life of madness in despair. The emperor Constantine contributed greatly to the respect paid to this state, by his attachment to those who devoted themselves to *divine philosophy*, or monkery. Considerable numbers of the softer sex forsook their elegant abodes, and all the endearments of domestic life, to dwell in caves and deserts. Amongst these, Paula, a matron, descended from one of the most illustrious families at Rome, with her daughter Eulalia, rent asunder every delicate domestic tie ; and, forsaking her home, her country, and her weeping offspring, she visited Jerome in Palestine, accompanied him in his visit to Epiphanius at Cyprus, and went to Paulinus at Antioch \*. Egypt was the great theatre for monastic action ; and, at the close of the fourth century, it was computed that twenty-seven thousand monks and nuns were to be found in that country †. As neither opulence

\* Euseb. Vit. Constant. lib. iv. c. 28.

† These secessions were countenanced and extolled by the most distinguished writers of this century. Ambrose exhorted virgins to enter into monasteries, even without the consent of their parents. It had been a practice for virgins to dedicate themselves to God, at a period anterior to the foundation of monasteries ; and they lived with and were maintained by their pa-



lence nor talents were required from these solitary devotees, monkery offered an agreeable asylum to the indolent and illiterate, who, if their pretensions to austerity were sufficiently fervent, were at once elevated into stations of peculiar honour and respectability. The conduct of the monks was agreeable to the different motives of religion, fanaticism, or hypocrisy, from which they had entered into that state. Many of them were pious, modest, disinterested, and compassionate; some gloomy, austere, and censorious; and others artfully obtained a considerable part of that property, the renunciation of which it was their principal employment to inculcate.

rents, except they were in very indigent circumstances, when they were supported by the Church, in whose canon (*Matricula*, or catalogue) they were commonly enrolled. At first, if these chaste spouses of the Church violated their profession by contracting an earthly connubial alliance, they were not obnoxious to ecclesiastical censure. In a later period, they were either excommunicated for this offence, or penance was required from the offending female, though the marriage was not declared void. By some of the imperial laws they were allowed liberty to marry, if, in compliance with the will of their parents, they had devoted themselves to a life of celibacy before the age of forty; nor was their consecration to be deemed valid before that age. The virgins and widows of the church enjoyed some peculiar civil immunities. In common with the clergy, they were exempted from the capitation tax; and their persons were esteemed so sacred, that severe laws were enacted against whoever should molest them. A particular station was assigned them in the Church, of whose revenues they possessed a share. Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq.* lib. vii.

The fortunate Anthony had the happiness, in traversing the deserts, to discover the retreat of Paul the hermit, whose eyes he piously closed, and resolved to imitate his holy example. His solitude was soon enlivened by numbers, for whose government he composed regulations, which were in a short time introduced by his disciple Hilarion into Syria and Palestine, and by others into Mesopotamia and Armenia. From the east it passed with celerity into the west. Basil introduced it into Greece, and Ambrose into Italy. Martin, the celebrated bishop of Tours, propagated monkery so rapidly in Gaul, that his funeral is said to have been attended by no less than 2000 monks \*. The numbers of this holy band, and the veneration paid to them, were such as to induce them sometimes to conceive themselves superior to the laws, the execution of which they frequently suspended, and ventured, with impunity, to snatch criminals from the hands of justice when they were conducting to execution †. The monks were divided into different orders, according to the different modes of life which they were disposed to adopt. The Cœnobites ‡ were associated under a governor, and dwelt in fixed habitations. The Eremites § solitarily resided in deserts, caves, or holes in the earth.

\* Fleury, v. 30.

† Sueur, A. D. 399.

‡ From κοινος (*coinos*, common) and βιος (*bios*, life); i. e. living in a community.

§ From ερημος, a desert.

The Anachorites \* wildly wandered in the most sequestered retreats, supporting life by the spontaneous productions of the earth, without any settled places of abode. The Sarabaites † were the venders of pretended relics, and the performers of fictitious miracles. All these orders originally included, equally, both the laity and clergy; but the increasing respect paid to these pretensions of extraordinary sanctity, occasioned some of the best ecclesiastical benefices to be offered to the monks, and in time the greater number of them were engaged in the immediate service of the Church.

Under the auspices of an emperor who publicly professed the faith of the Church, we naturally expect to see its external respectability increase. Constantine not only greatly enlarged and improved the edifices already erected, but he constructed a considerable number of additional temples, which he dedicated to departed saints, and adorned them with pictures or images, and the most costly magnificence. A very superb structure was reared, by the orders of the emperor, over the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem. Constantinople was adorned by the emperor with a superb church, dedicated to the twelve Apostles, which he proposed to make his own mausoleum; not

\* From *αναχωρεω*, to separate from society.

† Derived by some from the Hebrew *Sarah*, to rebel, from their irregular and disorderly lives.

perhaps without a latent hope that his soul might be benefited by his dust being mingled with the bones of those holy men, which he had carefully endeavoured to collect wherever they lay dispersed \*. Numberless churches, in different places, were erected over the tombs of the martyrs, which were only used on particular occasions, and were distinguished by the name of Martyria. The churches appointed for the constant performance of religious worship obtained the name of Tituli, and were thus denominated from the presbyters who officiated in them, and who received titles from them which fixed them to their particular situations. This regulation was well adapted for the decent and regular performance of divine worship. The attention of the emperor Constantine appears to have been seriously directed to this object, and to have operated not merely in seasons of leisure and tranquillity, but even in tumult and war. When he marched against the enemy, a tent was erected for him in the form of a chapel; which accompanied him in his movements, and in which divine service was performed by the attending priests and deacons †. Hence arose the custom of appointing  
a chaplain

\* This perhaps is the first instance of church interment, a practice which has survived the superstitious respect to holy places, whence it derived its origin.

† The Christians in the early ages of the Church imitated many of the ceremonies and practices of the Jews, and amongst others,  
that



a chaplain to every legion in the imperial army\*. Opulent persons who erected religious edifices, were invested with the right of appointing to them whatever ministers they chose to officiate. The Martyria and Tituli were equally decorated with every ornament which formerly embellished the temples of Heathenism; and Christian rites were

that of small portable tabernacles, in imitation of that made by the Israelites in the wilderness, which represented at the same time an oriental temple and palace, and it contained the ark. That which is described in Exodus is a large pavilion or tent. This custom of forming portable temples for holy uses was not, however, peculiar to the Jews (see Amos, v. 25, and Acts, vii. 42, &c.). The Egyptians, Cappadocians, Greeks, and Romans, carried their gods about in these tabernacles or *Cibona*; and it is probable, that when *Constantine* formed the idea of carrying about with him in his campaigns, a tabernacle constructed in the shape of a church, in order that neither he nor his army might be without a temple for holy uses; it might be as much an adaptation of Pagan as of Jewish usages, and might serve to conciliate the affections of the new converts from both these religions to the truths of Christianity.

The Cibonum mentioned above was the shell containing the seeds of the *Colocasia*, or Egyptian bean; its surface was flat, from which to the bottom it declined into a cone: it was used as a drinking vessel, and resembled our chalices or goblets. This inverted and suspended by its foot-stalk, was similar to the canopy that covered the heathen shrines; and in the beginning of the fifth century, as appears from Chrysostom, comprehended the pillars, curtains, canopy, and the whole shrine or tabernacle.

See Mr. Ledwich's *Observations on ancient Churches*, Archæologia, vol. viii. and Sozomen, xi. c. 8.

The inverted Cibonum constituted the covering of the Greek churches, called Cupolas.

\* Sozomen, lib. i. c. 8.

solemnized with all the pomp of lights, lustrations, and of splendid garments\*, which had distinguished the

\* The pall, a magnificent robe, reaching down to the feet, and originally a part of the imperial habit, is believed to have been conferred upon the bishop of Rome by Constantine, and from that time to have composed a part of the dress worn by the bishops of that city. This honour was granted by succeeding emperors to the other patriarchs. When they voluntarily resigned their sees, or were expelled from them, this badge of dignity was surrendered into the hands of the emperors from whom it had been derived. It was not long before the power of conferring this mark of distinction was vested in the hands of the popes, who did not however presume to present this gift till they had obtained permission from the emperors. Upon the decline of the Imperial power in the West, the Roman pontiffs bestowed this mark of distinction without their concurrence; but in order that it might no longer appear a part of the Imperial habit, which it was treasonable for a subject to assume without leave from the emperor, it was changed for a piece of white woollen cloth, made round, and thrown over the shoulders; above which were placed two others, the one falling over the breast, the other on the back, each decorated with a large red cross, and with several crosses of the same colour, on the upper part of the neck. When Boniface, whose zeal for the grandeur and power of the Church rendered him fertile in expedients for that end, had converted the Germans, he persuaded the bishops of France and Germany to pass a decree obliging their metropolitans to apply to Rome for that ornament, and to engage, upon receiving it, to consider themselves as under canonical obedience to the successors of St. Peter. This practice, so favourable to the extension of power, the Roman pontiffs endeavoured to impose upon all the metropolitans; and it was by degrees advanced to be unlawful for a metropolitan, archbishop, or primate, to exercise any part of his power till he had received his pall from Rome. In the ninth century, the metropolitanical jurisdiction and power were

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the Pagan ceremonies. In all churches, the seats of the women were separated from those of the men\*, who were not permitted to enter at the same door. The seats for females, however, differed in different churches. In the churches of Anastasia and Sancta Sophia, they were placed in porticoes, or galleries, whilst the men were seated below. In

conceived to be conferred by the pall. The spirited and factious Hincmar opposed a doctrine fraught with the imputation of such prodigious authority and power to the Romish see, and declared to pope Nicholas, that his pall had not conferred upon him any authority with which he had not been previously invested by the canons of the Catholic Church. Opposition to the pontifical power was so feeble, because confined to so few persons, that the doctrine continued to advance; and in the 13th century Innocent III. declared the pall to be *an ensign or token of the plenitude of apostolic power*, which communicated to those who received it from the hands of his holiness, a competent share of that power. To the time of Gregory VII. the new metropolitans were required only to send for their palls within three months after their ordination; that pope, however, required all who were not prevented by some lawful impediment, to solicit them in person at Rome; and the promise of canonical obedience was converted into an oath of allegiance. What at first was instituted as a means of extending the power and influence of the Romish Church, was improved into an extension of her revenue. The popes, in succeeding ages, no longer granted the pall merely to solicitation, but exacted exorbitant fees when they were sent to those who were raised to the archiepiscopal dignity, and even upon the translation of an archbishop to another archiepiscopal see. Bower's Hist. of Popes, vol. iii.

\* The time when this custom was introduced is not certainly known, but it is dated from a very early period by Eusebius. Hist. lib. vii, c. 17.

conformity

conformity to the practice both of the Heathens and the Jews, the rights of sanctuary were claimed and allowed to the Christian temples ; and, by the laws of the younger Theodosius, malefactors of various descriptions might claim protection from the Church against the civil power, within any of the precincts of consecrated ground ; the respect for which had become so excessive, that none were allowed to administer the sacrament beyond the places that were consecrated.

The difference which had arisen in the compositions of the Christian preachers, was not more remarkable, than the manner in which these discourses were received. Those applauses which had formerly been confined to the Theatres, or the Forum, were now permitted in the Christian Church. The preacher was repeatedly interrupted by the cry of “ Orthodox,” and clapping of the hands and feet. Chrysostom was applauded in the great church at Constantinople, by the people’s waving their garments, their plumes, and their handkerchiefs ; and by others laying their hands on their swords, and exclaiming, “ Thou art worthy of the priesthood.” Another mark of admiration consisted in moving the body like the waves of the sea slightly agitated by the wind \*. In some places, marks of still greater adulation were paid to the ministers of religion ; and the people sung Hosannahs to the bishop, similar

\* Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq. lib. xiv. c. 4.*



190 *Difference in Creeds and Liturgies.* [CENT. 4.  
to the conduct of the multitude towards our Lord  
on his entrance into Jerusalem\*.

The liturgies which were adopted in the different churches were far from being composed in the same form. Provided the fundamental doctrines of religion were the same, it was conceived of small importance in what manner the ritual was observed. They differed therefore materially in different churches, according to the circumstances or dispositions of the members. The same licence which was given to the liturgies, was accorded to the creeds †, which, though they agreed in doctrine, differed materially in their construction. The pomp of worship was greatly augmented in several churches, by an alteration which took place in the singing, particularly in the Church of Antioch, where the vocal performers were separated into two divisions, and sung the Psalms of David alternately. Constantine commanded the first day of the week to be celebrated with peculiar solemnity; and, in time, this practice extended over the whole Christian world.

The Agapæ, which for the three first centuries were observed in the Church, owing to some abuses which had insinuated themselves into their celebration, began to be disesteemed, and in time gradually declined. There were, however, various other observances to compensate, as far as ex-

\* Hieron. in Matt. xxi. tom. ix. p. 62.

† Bingham, xi. 6.

ternal rites could compensate, for their loss. In this century many new festivals were instituted in honour of the martyrs, and particular respect was paid to the places where they suffered, or where their remains were interred.

As baptism and the Lord's supper were very commonly supposed to impart some spiritual grace, the former of these rites was frequently deferred till the evening of life, and even till the hour of death\*, that the believer might leave the world with the greater certainty of his sins being forgiven, and before any new guilt had been contracted. Baptism at this period was usually accompanied by the sign of the cross†. Many were so desirous of receiving this initiatory rite in the same place with Christ, that they delayed baptism till they could travel into Judea. The em-

\* There were some examples in Africa of priests baptizing the dead, and offering them the holy sacrament; but this practice was always censured. See the Codex Can. Eccl. Afric. c. 18.

† The custom of using the sign of the cross, is supposed by many to have originated in its having been a private mark of distinction, during the seasons of persecution, between the Christians and Heathens; or, in peaceable times, to evince to the Pagans their not being ashamed of the circumstance with which they were continually reproached, that of the crucifixion of their Master. The Montanists were remarkable for their attachment to this ceremony. Tertullian, a zealous member of that sect, says, That in the commencement of any business, going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting candles, going to bed, or whatever they did, they signed their foreheads with the sign of the cross.

peror Constantine was amongst the number of those who favoured this species of popular superstition, and earnestly desired to receive the baptismal rite in the waters of Jordan.

Amongst the powers which in the fourth century were granted to the bishops, they appear to have been invested with authority sufficient to appoint fasts in their own churches \*. The abstinence upon these occasions, though strictly observed by great numbers, was yet by several commuted for by refraining from animal food and the juice of the grape ; so that in fact, though the nominal fasts were, in conformity to the prevailing austerities, considerably multiplied, abstinence was less observed by many than when they were less frequent. The use of penance still continued, but the offending clergy were exempted from public humiliation, and silently deposed from their ecclesiastical offices. After the Decian persecution, it was ordained, that penitents should make their confession in private, to a particular priest appointed for that purpose ; and that those parts of their misconduct which were unfit for the public ear should be suppressed. This custom continued in practice till nearly the close of this century, when an unhappy accident, which arose in the Constantinopolitan Church, occasioned the abolition of this order. An offending female, during the appointed time in which she remained in the

\* Bingham, xi. 6.

church, to wipe off by fasting and prayer her former offences, had been seduced, by one of the deacons, to contract fresh guilt. From this period, all confession, whether public or private, appears to have been discontinued by the Greek Church; and it is affirmed, that, from this period, the Greeks make their confessions only to God \*.

The controversy concerning the celebration of Easter, which had perplexed and divided the Church during the preceding century, was decided by the council of Nice, in favour of the western churches; and all Christians were commanded to commemorate this festival on the first Sunday which followed the fourteenth day of the first moon, after the vernal equinox. The emperor Constantine watched in common with the other Christians on the vigil of this solemn season; and, in addition to the lights which had been formerly kindled on this occasion, commanded not only the whole church, but also the whole city to be illuminated; which, in consequence of this request, exhibited on that evening a scene of uncommon splendour. This season was observed by the generality of Christians with peculiar reverence and marked attention. Valentinian, in the year 367, released from prison, on the occasion of this festival, all such as were not notorious delinquents; and established a custom which was imitated by

\* Priestley's *Corruptions*, vol. ii. p. 146.



succeeding emperors. Private persons also embraced the occasion which this season afforded to evince their beneficence and charity, particularly by granting *manumission* to *slaves*, as a proper expression of that mercy commemorated by this festival, which brought freedom to the captive, and happiness to all mankind \*.

\* Bingham, lib. xx. c. 5.

## C H A P. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE FOURTH  
CENTURY.

*Abuse of Mysticism—Eustathians and Messalians—Donatists  
—Disputes concerning the Succession to the See of Carthage  
—Donatus—Violence of the Parties—Rogatians—Arius—  
Principles of the Arians—Arius condemned and ex-  
iled—Council of Nice—Arianism condemned there—Arius  
recalled from Banishment by Constantine—Death of Arius  
—Arianism protected by Constantius—Semi-Arians—Eu-  
nomians—Contests between the different Branches of Arians  
—Semi-Arians divided—Macedonians—Meletians—Pho-  
tinus—Apollinarians—Priscillianists—Antidicomaritanes  
—Collyridians—Luciferians—Audeus—Ætius, &c.*

THE doctrines of the mystics, who assumed a degree of sanctity and perfection unknown to vulgar minds, and affected to elevate the soul by rejecting the gratifications of sense, were adopted by the most considerable part of the Christian world, as the dictates of pure religion, imbibed from the fountain of truth. Amongst those who carried these doctrines to the greatest excess, the sects of the Eustathians and Messalians were peculiarly distinguished. The followers of Eustathius contended strongly for the exercise of the greatest austerities, and not only prohibited the

enjoyments of wine, flesh, and a connubial state; but prescribed immediate divorce to all who had already entered into a married life. This fanaticism was, however, inferior to that of the Messalians, who professed to believe that the soul, by spiritual exercises, was enabled to expel the dæmon by which they conceived it to be inhabited, and might then be perfectly united with the Divine Essence \*. The Messalians affected an air of uncommon devotion; and maintained their ground in the Eastern empire during a considerable time, in defiance of the decrees of councils, and the proscriptions of the emperor.

Amongst the contests which disturbed the peace of the Church in the fourth century, the schism of the Donatists demands, if not the principal, at least a distinguished place. The doctrines of this body were, however, strictly conformable to those of the Church from which they separated. Cæcilianus, the archdeacon of Carthage, had, on the demise of the bishop, been consecrated to the vacant see by some of the African bishops, without waiting for the assent of the bishops of Numidia. These offended prelates cited Cæcilianus to account to them for this omission; and on his refusal to sub-

\* It is more than once necessary to caution the reader, to receive all these accounts of the sectaries with great allowance. — In all probability many parts of their creed bordered upon absurdity; but as we have our accounts only from their adversaries, candour must induce us to believe them exaggerated.

mit to their authority, a council was convened, consisting of seventy bishops, in which the refractory Cæcilianus was deposed, and his deacon, Majorinus, declared his successor. This sentence, which divided into factions the Carthaginian church, and in fact gave it two bishops at the same crisis, was occasioned by a variety of causes, independent of the irregularity attending the consecration of Cæcilianus. There were several competitors for the vacant see, who eagerly seized the opportunity of removing their fortunate rival; and all the influence of Lucilla, a rich and superstitious female, was exerted against Cæcilianus, who had reprimanded her for her folly. Nor was this all. Felix of Aptungis, the principal bishop who had assisted at his consecration, was accused of being a traditor, or one, who, during the Diocletian persecution, had delivered up the sacred books to be burned; and who therefore was supposed not competent to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit. To these it was added, that Cæcilianus himself had, during the persecution, behaved towards the Christians with inhumanity. Constantine appointed this controversy to be examined by the bishop of Rome, assisted by three others; and the result of their deliberations was favourable to Cæcilianus. Felix of Aptungis was not less fortunate; his cause was examined by the proconsul of Africa, and by his decision he was absolved.

But the restoration of the degraded bishop was



not calculated to satisfy the minds of his adversaries ; who headed by Donatus, an African bishop, fomented fresh discontents, and occasioned the emperor to convene a council at Arles\*, where they were again condemned. Their dissatisfaction still continued ; and two years afterwards, Constantine, to whom the different parties had consented to refer their cause, approved the consecration of Cæcilianus. The resentment and contumely with which the Donatists received this decision, added to their former behaviour, so much exasperated the emperor, that he deprived them of their churches, banished the seditious bishops, and even condemned to death some of the party. This violent, and perhaps imprudent, resentment was not calculated to produce peace. The Donatists asserted, that the apostolical succession had been interrupted ; that the whole ecclesiastical body in Europe and Asia was infected with guilt and schism, since they held communion with the depraved African Church ; that the preservation of the Catholic Church was confined to those African believers, who had preserved their faith and discipline inviolate ; and that all communion with other churches ought to be avoided, lest they should be contaminated by their impurity. This rigid theory was accompanied by conduct equally austere. Every proselyte was

\* At this council 200 bishops attended, and amongst the rest Restitutus bishop of London. Priestley's Christian Church.

carefully re-baptized and re-ordained. All who had communicated with other churches, were obliged to perform public penance previous to their admission into this immaculate Church. But it was not with the pen and the tongue only that the cause of Donatism was supported. The Circumcellians, a body of savage and fanatical persons, exasperated by the severe execution of the laws of Constantine against the Donatists, collected in formidable bodies, assumed the titles of captains and saints, and rushed out as avengers of those who had been the victims of the law, spreading terror and consternation throughout the African provinces. Animated by implacable hatred against the opposite party, and a fanatical desire for obtaining the honour of martyrdom, they sought death with avidity, and even solicited their enemies to inflict upon them those temporal miseries which should introduce them to eternal glory. Constantine, hoping that time might be more conducive than force to calm these disturbances, abrogated the laws against the Donatists; and his son Constans laboured earnestly to heal the divisions of the African Church. But these efforts were in vain; Donatus the Great (who had succeeded Majorinus, and from whom the party derived its name), with the other factious prelates, opposed every attempt towards a reconciliation. The whole party rose in arms, and were defeated by the imperial army: numbers fled, a considerable part

were sent into banishment, and many were punished with extreme severity. The Donatists divided into many sects, amongst whom the Rogatians contended, that the Church of Christ existed only in their community.

The schism of the Donatists was an impetuous torrent, which inundated and desolated the adjacent country; but its limits were prescribed, and its mischief confined to the African provinces. The Trinitarian controversy was a deluge which overflowed the whole Christian world. Arius, a presbyter of the Church of Alexandria, acute, eloquent, and subtle, contended, in opposition to his bishop Alexander, in an assembly of the presbyters, “that the Son was essentially distinct from the Father: that he was a dependent spontaneous production, created by the will of the Father out of nothing: that he had been begotten before all worlds; but that there had been a time when he was not: that the Father had impressed upon him the effulgence of his glory, and transfused into him his ample spirit: that he was the framer of the world, and governed the universe, in obedience to the will of his Father and Monarch\*.”

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\* Dr. Prieſtley’s history of the origin of this controversy is as follows: “Arius, a presbyter of the church of Alexandria, who excelled in logic (a science which was much cultivated by the learned of that age), having advanced an opinion concerning the person of Christ, which occasioned some dispute among the Clergy, Alexander, the bishop, at first neglected it; but, at the persuasion of his friends, he at length gave both parties a hearing,  
and

As every innovation will find some favourers, especially if supported by ingenuity, the party of Arius soon became very considerable, and was countenanced by two bishops, and by numbers distinguished both by rank and abilities. Alexander, together with the inferior ministers of the Alexandrian Church, exhorted the apostate presbyter to renounce his errors, and return to their communion; but finding this ineffectual, the zealous prelate assembled a council of his brethren, composed of an hundred bishops, who, after hearing Arius persist in his opinions, publicly condemned them. Not discouraged, however, by this act of authority, Arius retired into Palestine, where he was received into communion, and made considerable accessions to his cause, notwithstanding the excommunications which were fulminated by Alexander against both him and his schismatic followers\*.

### These

and though towards the beginning of the conference he did not seem to favour one party more than the other, at length he took part against Arius. This is the account of Sozomen."

"But Socrates says, that as Alexander was discoursing in an ostentatious manner (*φιλοδομιῶν*) on the subject of the trinity, in the presence of his presbyters, and (using philosophical language) said that there was *an unity in the trinity* (*ἐν τριάδι μονὰς εἶναι*), Arius, one of his presbyters, replied that such language favoured of Sabellianism. In the course of the debate Arius likewise said, that if the Father begat the Son, there must have been a beginning of the Son's existence, and consequently a time when he was not." Priestley's Hist. of the Christian Church, vol. ii. p. 24.

\* It does not appear that in all respects the faith of Alexander



These disputes, in which many wise and good men were engaged on both sides, and in which the angry combatants assailed each other with the utmost opprobrium and contumely, attracted the attention of Constantine, who, in order to quiet a disturbance so disgraceful to the Church, wrote both to the bishop and the presbyter, reprimanding them for their intemperance, and exhorting them to peace. But the words of the emperor were not sufficiently powerful to extinguish a flame which had been too long permitted, and which, at that period, raged with the utmost violence. In the year 325, therefore, he convened the celebrated council at Nice in Bithynia, of which an ample account has already been given. Before this council Arius appeared, declared his opinions, and, with his friends the bishops of Ptolemais and Marmorica, who refused to subscribe to the Nicene faith,

under himself reached the standard of orthodoxy. His opinions indeed seem to have been not very different from those of the Semi-Arians. But a charge of a still heavier nature has been exhibited against this prelate, by Philostorgius—that he was indebted for his bishopric to Arius, who, when he might himself have obtained the see, declined the honour, and preferred Alexander. Were this charge substantiated, however we might be inclined to think the good bishop's zeal was according to knowledge, we should still not conceive it according to gratitude. But we must remember, that though this tale was related at a time when the event was recent, and by one who openly blames Arius where he conceived him wrong, yet it was written by a professed Arian, and as such, an enemy to Alexander.

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was condemned. The apostate presbyter was banished; his writings were committed to the flames, and capital punishments were denounced against all in whose possession they might be found\*. A party of the bishops, who had assisted at the Nicene council, and subscribed to its creed, secretly favoured the cause of Arius; and Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and Theognis, bishop of Nice, afforded protection to the persecuted Arians, for which they were banished into Gaul. The faith of Constantine appears, in this instance, to have been rather uncertain and wavering; he understood not this perplexed controversy, and acted, at different times, as he was influenced by the ecclesiastics of each party, who accused one another not only of heterodoxy, but of disaffection to the emperor. One of the followers of Arius, who, by the dying words of his sister Constantia, had been recommended to the emperor, had the address to persuade him that the sentence of Arius was unjust. The emperor on this, after an exile of three years, recalled the presbyter, who presented his confession of faith (which appeared orthodox to Constantine), and sought to be received into communion in the Alexandrian Church. Athanasius, who had succeeded Alexander in that see, rejected his application; but this resistance was so little agreeable to the emperor, that the Arian bishops easily procured from him a

\* Soc. Hist. l. i. c. 9.

decree for the banishment of the Alexandrian bishop. Arius and his adherents were received into the communion of the Church at Jerusalem; but were still rejected by that of Alexandria. The emperor, however, sent for him to Constantinople, and issued an absolute command for his admission into the Constantinopolitan Church. This honour was prevented by the unexpected death of Arius, which his enemies ascribed to the judgments of God against him for his impieties: his friends, however, had but too much reason for believing, that he had fallen the miserable victim of his implacable enemies.

The Arians found in the successor of Constantine a protector and a friend. Their great patron, the bishop of Nicomedia, was promoted to the Constantinopolitan see; and while the western emperors, steadily attached to the Nicene faith, were advancing its progress by all possible means, Constantius was no less zealous in his opposition to that, and his attachment to the Arian cause. During the remainder of this century, except in the reign of Julian, the Nicene and the Arian parties were at different times protected by the different emperors, and the successful party invariably and brutally triumphed in the commission of every act of unkindness and severity that could disturb and distress their adversaries. But the hatred of the Arians was not confined to the Consubstantialists. They divided amongst themselves, and regarded  
each

each other with implacable aversion. The Homoioufians\*, or Semi-Arians, declared their belief, that *the Son was of a similar substance with the Father*. The Eunomians, who were the disciples of Ætius and Eunomius, the latter a man of a restless and aspiring spirit, who had entered into almost every profession of life, opposed their opinion, and contended that *the Son was unlike or unequal to the Father*. The Eunomians were condemned in the council of Ancyra; and in the two councils summoned by Constantius, one at Seleucia for the eastern Church, the other at Ariminum for the western. The Eunomians were overpowered at Seleucia; and the assembly at Ariminum, which was composed of about a fourth part Arians, subscribed to a creed, which contained little more than the vague proposition, that the Son of God was not a creature like other creatures. The confession of Ariminum was sent through the empire, and all the bishops were required to subscribe it. But none were allowed to maintain Arianism, by asserting that the Son of God was of a nature unlike that of the Father, and to rank him in the number of creatures. These subtle and almost imperceptible distinctions divided the Arians

\* The English reader must be careful to make a distinction between this word and *Homoioufian*, which was the appellation the orthodox assumed. Homoioufian is derived from the Greek word ὁμος (homos) alike, and is expressive of the consubstantiality; but Homoioufian comes from ὁμοιος (homoios) similar, and is expressive only of resemblance.



into a considerable number of sects, who mutually detested and anathematized each other. Towards the close of this century the Arians and Macedonians, a branch from the same stock, were compelled by the imperial laws to have no bishops. This sect, however, flourished considerably for more than three centuries, and was not at length crushed without violence and persecution. Its tenets were received by the Goths, the Vandals, and the Burgundians, and long continued to be professed by those barbarous nations.

The Semi-Arians, as may be conceived from their name, adopted not all the opinions of their Arian brethren; but they rejected the doctrine of consubstantiality with equal zeal, though the greater part of them professed to believe the divinity of the Logos, or Word (the Son of God); but many utterly denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Like the Arians, the Semi-Arians were divided into sects, the principal of which obtained the name of Macedonians, from their leader Macedonius; who, while he denied the consubstantiality of the Son, asserted his likeness to the Father; and affirmed, that the third person in the Trinity was a divine energy diffused throughout the universe, and not a distinct person proceeding from the Father and the Son. Many of the Semi-Arians gradually united themselves to the orthodox party, from whom their grounds of difference were, in some instances, scarcely perceptible, and signed  
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the Nicene confession of faith. On the promulgation of the law of toleration by the emperor Gratian, many of the Semi-Arians again seceded from the church; but their numbers afterwards, from a variety of causes, sensibly declined.

It is difficult to determine whether the Meletians should be considered as a distinct sect, or as a society of Arians. The schism was originally produced by the deposition of Meletius, bishop of Lycopolis in Egypt, who was accused of various offences, and particularly of sacrificing to idols in a time of persecution. After his deposition by the council of Alexandria, however, Meletius continued to assume the titles, and exercise the functions of his office. He afterwards united with Arius; but whether previous to the meeting of the council of Nice, or not, is not ascertained. At this council the affair of Meletius was compromised, apparently to his satisfaction; for he was allowed to retain the title of bishop, without the functions. The sect however continued till the fifth century, and professed the doctrines of Arius.

Arianism, which engaged the attention of all ranks of the people during the whole of this century, did not so entirely engross them as to prevent the propagation and reception of other opinions, which differed from those of the orthodox creed. Photinus, bishop of Sirmium, asserted, that Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin

gin Mary, and endued with a divine emanation, or heavenly ray, which he called the *Word*; and that, on account of this union between the divine word and his human nature, Jesus was styled the Son of God, and even God himself. He denied that the Holy Spirit was a distinct person, and affirmed that he was a celestial *virtue*, proceeding from the Deity. This prelate was the disciple and friend of Marcellus, the bishop of Ancyra, who had been charged with adopting the errors of Sabellianism, or an attempt to confound the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead. Photinus occasioned his friendly tutor additional censure, whose impieties, according to the charitable spirit of the times, were considerably augmented, by his refusal to condemn the errors of Photinus. Private friendship, christian charity, or the knowledge that others were ready to involve him in evils similar to those which threatened and surrounded his pupil, were conceived reasons too weak to deter him from an endeavour to punish the errors of his friend. The efforts of repeated councils, and the effects of repeated banishments, were, for a long time, insufficient to destroy the errors of this sectary; who, though excommunicated by the Church, defended himself during seven years by the assistance of the people; but at length died in exile.

The Apollinarians asserted, after Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea, that the Divinity, joined to the flesh,

flesh, performed the offices of an intelligent soul in Jesus Christ, and received the impresson which the soul of man receives. Many of the followers of Apollinaris refined upon this, and affirmed, that one nature only existed in Jesus Christ, and that the flesh was of the same nature with the divinity. Others affirmed, that Jesus Christ had taken his body from heaven, and that it was impassive and immortal; and his birth, passion, death, burial, and resurrection, only illusive appearances. The Council of Constantinople condemned these opinions, and many by whom they were professed were reunited to the communion of the Church.

The Priscillianists derived their denomination from Priscillian, a man of rank and fortune in Spain, who was afterwards bishop of Abila. A considerable mixture of Gnosticism and Unitarianism appears to have been united in this sect, with the tenets of both which, however, they were but imperfectly acquainted. They thought that the Devil was not made by God, but arose from chaos and darkness\*; said that the bodies of men were made by the Devil; condemned marriage, and denied the resurrection of the body; asserted that the soul was of a divine substance, which having offended in heaven, was sent into the body as a place of punishment; that men are subject to ne-

\* Leo, Opera, p. 167.



cessity, to sin, and to the power of the stars; and our bodies compounded according to the order of the twelve signs of the Zodiac\*. They agreed that the Son is inferior to the Father, and that there was a time when the Son was not†. The rule of manners prescribed by this sect was remarkably austere. Priscillian, their leader, was accused by the other Spanish bishops, in consequence of the increase of his followers; and he was banished by the emperor Gratian from Spain. He was again, however, permitted to return; but was once more accused by his implacable enemies, and put to death at Treves, in the year 384, by the perfidious Maximus, at the instigation of Ithacius, bishop of Sossoba; who, whatever might be the professed purity of his faith, was deficient in every amiable quality of the human heart. The opinions of the Priscillianists did not end with the death of their erroneous and unfortunate leader, but extended their influence, and continued during several succeeding centuries‡.

The recorder of folly, if he be possessed of humanity, can find little enjoyment in his task, and it is equally unnecessary and unpleasant to dwell upon the opinions and conduct of those sects who differed from the Church only in one or two points of perhaps little importance, or whose errors were

\* Aug. de Hæres. cap. 70.

† Leo, Opera, c. i. ii. p. 168.

‡ Sandius, Hist. p. 127.

received by few, and soon terminated. Amongst these smaller sects were the Antidicomaranites, who contended, that after the birth of Christ the Virgin Mary did not continue in her immaculate state, but associated with her husband Joseph; and the Collyridians, who, falling into the opposite extreme, superstitiously worshipped the Virgin, and made an offering to her, upon certain appointed days, of a particular kind of bread. These errors were confined to a few; those of Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, were rather more diffused. This prelate had been a zealous opposer of Arianism; he had separated himself not only from communion with all of that sect, but even from all who acknowledged as bishops those who had signed the Ariminum confession of faith, and had written against the Arians with great vehemence; but the purity of his own faith did not continue uncorrupted, and he is accused of asserting, that the soul was transfused from the parents to the children, and that it was of a fleshly substance.

Amidst the tide of superstition which had almost overflowed the Church, many lamented its devastations, and some were so confident as to attempt to stop the torrent; but their courage was not rewarded either with applause or success; and, independent of the doctrinal errors into which they fell, they were, on account of their opposition to the corrupt and prevailing opinions of the age, loaded with calumny and regarded with abhor-

rence. One of the principal of these hardy champions for the truth was Audeus, a Syrian, of uncommon virtue, whose zeal against the profligacy of the clergy procured his excommunication from the Church. Unmoved by the censures which he had incurred, Audeus associated himself with a society of Christians, who were distinguished not only by their abhorrence of clerical depravity, but by their attachment to the Jewish time of celebrating Easter; and their belief that the resemblance between God and man consisted in the body, whence they have been charged with believing that the Supreme Being was corporeal. He was banished by the Emperor into Scythia, where he continued to make several converts, and established several monasteries. His zeal against superstition and depravity was seconded by Ætius, one of the leaders of the Semi-Arians; and Jovinian, an Italian monk. The principal point on which Ætius and his adherents differed from the other Semi-Arians, appears to have been their belief that there was no distinction founded in Scripture between a presbyter and a bishop. He earnestly condemned prayers for the dead, and several other rites, and attempted to restore the discipline of the Church to its primitive simplicity and excellence. Jovinian, though himself a monk, and continuing in a state of celibacy, took the utmost pains to expose the peculiar doctrines of monachism, though, unlike the other reformers of this time, he continued  
in

in the orthodox faith. His doctrines were so obnoxious to the clergy, that he was excommunicated by Siricius, the bishop of Rome, and was condemned by the emperor Honorius to be whipped, and banished to the small and obscure island of Boa, in Illyricum.



## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
FOURTH CENTURY.

*Constantine not eminent as a Patron of Literature—Eusebius—Pamphilus—Athanasius—Basil—Gregory Nazianzen—Gregory of Nyssa—Ambrose, Bishop of Milan—Lactantius—Jerome—Rufinus—St. Augustine—Chrysostom—Marcellus—Eustathius—Victorinus—Hilary—Apollinaris—Ephraim of Edessa—Didymus—Diodorus of Tarsus—Epiphanius—Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem.*

WERE we to estimate the learning and abilities of the writers of this century by their numbers or their zeal, our admiration of their talents would not be confined within ordinary limits. But intestine commotions and religious controversies are circumstances not extremely favourable to the most admired blossoms of literature, which expand in the gay sunshine of tranquillity, but close and fold their leaves in the inclement season of turbulence and distraction. The first emperor who professed Christianity had devoted little of his time to literature; and whatever favours he might be disposed to bestow upon monks and ecclesiastics, he does not appear to have greatly signalized himself as a patron of learning. A desire to abolish Paganism, which was supported by the wit and talents of some of its professors, and to advance Christianity

Christianity upon its ruins, rather than a love of literature, induced the Emperor to encourage a taste for study, and to erect public libraries \* for the extension of knowledge. But when honours and preferments were not annexed to excellence in learning, when science was not encouraged either by the favour of the prince, or the approbation of the people, and confined to the investigation of obscure scholastic theology, we cannot be surprised to find a rapid decay of the arts and sciences, numbers of the clergy eminently unlearned, and the cell of the monk a fruitful hot-bed for the cultivation of ignorance.

Notwithstanding this, there were, amongst the number of Christian writers in the fourth century, some who may be justly distinguished for their learning and elegance. Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, claims a distinguished rank in the catalogue, both on account of his abilities and virtue. He was a native of Palestine, and obtained his bishopric in the year 314; but at a very early

\* Several public libraries had indeed been erected before Christianity was the established religion of the empire. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, built a library for the service of the Church. The Church of Sancta Sophia had a library, which is supposed to have been begun by Constantine, and augmented by Theodosius Junior, and which contained in his time an hundred thousand books. In the reigns of Basiliscus and Zeno, they were increased to an hundred and twenty thousand, when they, and the fabric in which they were contained, were destroyed by the firing of the city in a popular tumult.

period was accused of favouring the Arians, and of continuing attached to the bishops of that sect; and several of his expressions afford some ground for the belief, that the suspicion was not wholly unfounded. It is probable, however, that the candour and moderation of his temper, rather than any defection from the orthodox faith, might occasion this imputation. In the council of Nice he abandoned the Arian party, but supported them in their endeavours to deprive Athanasius of the Alexandrian see.

He composed an ecclesiastical history, from the commencement of the Church till the council of Nice\*; a chronicle of the principal events from the beginning of the world till the twentieth year of Constantine; four panegyrical books of the life of that emperor; *the Preparation and Demonstration of the Gospel*; a discourse against the philosopher Hierocles, who compared Apollonius to Jesus Christ; five books against Marcellus of Ancyra; a commentary on the Psalms; and five books of *An Apology for Origen*, which he wrote conjointly with his friend Pamphilus the Martyr, from his attachment to whom he received his name. To these he added a sixth book, after the death of his friend, and composed many treatises in divinity

\* Once for all, let this acknowledgment suffice; that the basis of this history, to the age of Constantine, is Eusebius, assisted by an inspection of the early fathers, and the remarks of modern writers.

and criticism. The amiableness of his temper is apparent from no instance being adduced, by his enemies, of his having used any means of depressing others with the Emperor, or of acquiring any advantages for himself. A suspicion, however, of a very serious nature has attacked the conduct of Eusebius, while under the apprehension of persecution; and he was thought to have purchased his retreat from the confinement of a prison, by compliances which were dishonourable, if not base. The inviolable attachment of Eusebius to the amiable and accomplished Pamphilus, presbyter at Cæsarea, does honour to his feelings as a man. He assumed his name \*, and composed an account of his life. This martyr to the faith erected a school at Cæsarea; and, after suffering much during the Diocletian persecution, was at length cruelly put to death. Few of his writings have reached posterity.

However varying, or however doubtful, the character of Eusebius may appear to the world, that of Athanasius is fixed, decisive, and resolute. A deacon in the Alexandrian church, at the commencement of the Arian disputes he joined in opinion with his bishop, and accompanied him to the council of Nice. On the demise of his diocesan he obtained the Alexandrian see, but he enjoyed not long in tranquillity his new situation: orthodox in his principles, decided in his opinions, and

\* Eusebius Pamphilus.



resolute in maintaining them, it is not surprising that he should soon become an object of detestation to the Arian party, whom he vehemently opposed. A charge was exhibited against him by his enemies, of having exacted new duties from the people for the emolument of the Church. This charge was dismissed by the Emperor, but two others succeeded; that he had thrown down and broken a sacred chalice, overthrown the sacramental elements, destroyed the church of Mareotis, and that he had added murder to sacrilege, in killing Arsenius, bishop of Hypsele. To the first of these accusations he replied, by proving, that neither church, altar, nor chalice existed in the place where he was said to have destroyed them; and effectually refuted the other, by producing to the sight of his accusers the schismatic bishop, who had for a time thought proper to retire. The Arian party had, however, previously determined his disgrace; and in the council of Tyre he was degraded, deposed, and exiled. In vain the injured prelate hastily removed himself to Constantinople, and publicly pleaded his cause at the footstool of his prince. The charge of having threatened to prevent the exportation of corn from Alexandria to Constantinople had been urged against him to Constantine; who, irritated at his supposed contumacy, dismissed him into exile to Treves.

The accession of the sons of Constantine, which produced leave to the exiled bishops to re-  
turn



turn to their respective sees; restored Athanasius, by a decree of the younger Constantius, who continued in the orthodox faith, to Alexandria. But the cabal and faction under Constantius again deposed him, ordained Gregory in his room, and ordered the prefect of Egypt to confirm the new archbishop in his office; while Athanasius retired to Rome. In a council of fifty bishops of Italy, the innocence of the deposed bishop was unanimously declared; and at the end of three years he received a summons to attend at Milan the emperor Constans, who required his brother to call a council for determining the case of Athanasius. In this council held at Sardica, after a series of angry debates, Athanasius was declared innocent; and Gregory very opportunely dying just at that period, he entered into the peaceable possession of his see. Tranquillity was not, however, the path in which Athanasius was destined to proceed; death removed his princely and generous protector Constans; and Constantius, in compliance with the reiterated persuasions of those who hated the zeal and abilities of the Alexandrian bishop, issued orders again for his expulsion. The bishops, who in the councils of Arles and Milan had opposed the degradation of Athanasius, were required to subscribe his sentence; and a formulary of consent was transmitted to the absent bishops, who, upon their refusal to subscribe it, were immediately banished by the Emperor. George, of Cappadocia,

was then placed on the episcopal throne; and the exiled archbishop was assaulted at midnight, by the troops of the empire, in the church of St. Theonas, while he was performing his devotions. He continued his employment during the time when the doors of the sanctuary were assailed; and, when they were at length burst open, with great intrepidity refused to consult his own safety, till he had provided for that of his congregation. Six years he remained concealed among the monks of the deserts of Thebais, notwithstanding the vigilance of his pursuers, and the force of the most severe edicts against all who should protect or conceal the deserter. The accession of Julian, who granted the exiled bishops leave to return, restored Athanasius to his see, which became vacant by the death of George, the second usurper. As the zeal of Athanasius was not agreeable to the Emperor (who again issued orders for his exile and apprehension), he was once more so fortunate as to escape to his former recess, where he continued till the reign of Jovian, and again assumed the government of his church. Under Valens he was banished once more, and remained confined for four months; at the end of which he was again recalled, and enjoyed the tranquil possession of his see, till the year 373, when his death put a period to a series of incessant exertions in the cause of the Church.

The zeal of Athanasius in the orthodox cause occasioned his composing a number of writings  
against

against the heresy of Arius and Apollinaris; several discourses and letters in justification of himself; and the life of Saint Anthony; by which he greatly contributed to increase a veneration for the saints, and a regard for the monastic life. Many of his performances are lost, but sufficient remain to form a splendid edition of three folio volumes by the learned Montfaucon.

Basil the Great, bishop of Cæsarea, was one of the most amiable and accomplished characters of the fourth century. Eloquent, ingenious, and learned, he was surpassed, and even equalled, by few. He studied in the schools of Cæsarea and Constantinople, and then repaired to Athens to perfect himself in the sciences. In this situation he contracted a strict intimacy with the amiable Gregory Nazianzen, whose father was the bishop of that city. After some time employed in assisting his father in the duties of his office, Gregory again joined his friend, who had retired with a few select associates into the solitudes of Pontus, where, in mutual study and reciprocal esteem, they passed a considerable time. Gregory quitted his solitude once more to assist his father; and, after several vicissitudes, was advanced by Theodosius to the bishopric of Constantinople, which, on account of the people objecting to his being a stranger, he soon resigned; and, after some time spent in attending to clerical duties in his native city, retired to the country, where he died. During this time

Basil

Basil had consented to leave his retreat, after having established the monastic state in Pontus and Cappadocia, and accepted the see of Cæsarea. His attachment to the Nicene faith was marked and sincere. He separated from communion with his bishop Dranius, who had subscribed the confession at Ariminum, and steadily opposed the entreaties and threatenings of the emperor Valens to embrace the opinions of Arius. The works of these friends are numerous. Basil composed several sermons; a reply to the doctrines of the Arian Eunomius; a work upon the divinity of the Holy Ghost; several letters, some homilies, and a commentary upon the first sixteen chapters of Isaiah. Gregory Nazianzen composed many excellent discourses, letters, and some poems. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, the brother of Basil, far from imitating the examples of his brother and friend, had married, and was with great difficulty induced to forsake the profession of rhetoric for the ecclesiastical state. His promotion in the Church, however, very soon succeeded that of his brother, and, like him, he was distinguished by his steady attachment to the orthodox cause. He composed commentaries upon Scripture; discourses upon the mysteries and upon morality; panegyrics upon saints; a controversial tract against Eunomius, and several other works.

The remarkable story of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, has an appearance of romance seldom found in real life. This prelate was the prefect  
of



of Liguria and Emilia, and on entering the church of Milan in his civil capacity, to quell a riot between the Arian and orthodox parties, concerning the choice of a bishop, found himself called upon to assume the vacant office by the unanimous voice of the assembly, and was compelled to advance at once from the humble station of a catechumen to the command of the Church. In this high situation, he firmly sustained the cause of orthodoxy against the Arians of his diocese, against the entreaties and threats of the empress Justina, the mother of Valentinian, and even of the emperor Theodosius, whom he prevented from establishing a Jewish synagogue at Milan, and from erecting an altar to Victory. His zeal did not rest here; he rebuked the Emperor for his slaughter at Theffalonica, and compelled him to atone for his guilt, by the performance of public penance. Ambrose was loud in the praises of a monastic life, and uncharitable in his conduct towards those who differed from him in religious belief. With a credulity which bordered upon folly, or with a design to impose upon the credulity of mankind (a practice not very uncommon in those times), he pretended to the Arians to produce men possessed with devils; who, upon the approach of certain relics, had been compelled to acknowledge the purity of the Nicene faith, and the impiety of that of Arius. Ambrose composed several treatises in praise of celibacy; a Discourse upon Mysteries and Penance; several



books concerning Faith, and the Holy Ghost; a Discourse upon the Incarnation; and several other works, which have been published in two volumes folio.

The eloquence of Lactantius, and the beauty and purity of his style, raise him superior to every author of the fourth century, and place him upon an equality with some of the most accomplished writers of ancient Rome. Entrusted with the education of Crispus, the unfortunate son of Constantine, whom the monarch afterwards put to death, Lactantius, amidst the splendours of a court, was distinguished only by his talents and his poverty. His principal work consists of a masterly refutation of Paganism, and a learned comparison between it and Christianity. It is to the indelible disgrace of the age, that while a number of fanatic monks and popular declaimers obtained the highest stations in the Church, a man who possessed the learning of Aristotle, with the eloquence of Cicero, and the wit of Horace—who united philosophy with religion, and an earnest piety with all the graces of a polished taste and enlightened understanding—should be permitted to languish without distinction or reward. It is however but too common a case, that the service which is rendered to a party, is rated higher than that which is rendered to mankind in general. The defence of a single dogma shall raise a man to eminence and fortune; while the enlightening of thousands, the improving of the hearts,

hearts, the morals, the judgments, and religious sentiments of a nation, shall frequently be passed over, with scarcely the cold return of fruitless praise\*.

The close of the fourth century, and the beginning of the fifth, were distinguished by the writings and example of the learned Jerom, a monk of Palestine; and the ingenious Augustin, bishop of Hippo. Deeply versed in sacred literature, and entirely devoted to study, Jerom consented to receive the order of priesthood, only upon condition that he should not be compelled to perform any of its offices; and for several years pursued, by turns, a sequestered and active life. After the death of his friend Damasus, bishop of Rome, Jerom retired to a small cell in Bethlehem, where the reputation of his learning and sanctity attracted the notice, and procured him the visits, of the pious and distinguished ladies Paula, Eustochium, and Melania; and these were soon accompanied by numbers who were desirous of embracing a monastic life. Paula, in order to gratify this pious desire, so strongly encouraged by the ex-

\* “ Such was the taste of the times and the people, that Lactantius, who was a man of learning and real eloquence, a man of sound sentiments, extensive knowledge, and inoffensive life, the most excellent of the Latin fathers, and justly called the Christian Cicero, was in want of common necessaries; while Ambrose, who was not worthy to carry his books, was elected to the rich see of Milan: and this when the people elected their own bishops.”  
Robin. Ecc. Researches.

ample and precepts of Jerom, erected on the spot a church and four monasteries, the former for the men, and the latter for the women. The warmth and austerity of his temper, the mixture of enthusiasm and superstition in all his sentiments and conduct, and the contempt and invectives which he poured upon all who differed from him, are blemishes in the character of Jerom. In his retirement he composed a considerable number both of critical and theological writings; several commentaries upon Scripture; two Latin translations of the Bible\*, and a variety of other productions.

He

\* The Septuagint translation of the Bible was generally read in all churches, where Greek was the vulgar language; or else those translations into other languages which were made from that translation. Till the time of Jerom there was no translation of the Bible, from the Hebrew, in the Latin church; but only such as were made from the Greek translation of the Septuagint. The Septuagint was used every where in the Greek churches, except perhaps in that part of Syria where Syriac was the vulgar language, i. e. in Osdroene and Mesopotamia, where they had a Syriac translation from the Hebrew in a short time after the death of the Apostles. Several learned men, particularly Origen, Hesychius, and Lucian of Antioch, revised and corrected the old translation of the Septuagint, which, from the variety of copies, and the ignorance and negligence of transcribers, had become much corrupted. Hence, three celebrated editions of the Septuagint were used in the eastern churches. The copy by Hesychius was made use of in Alexandria and Egypt; Constantinople, and all the Asiatic churches as far as Antioch, used the copy revised by Lucian; and the churches of Palestine and Arabia read the copy corrected by Origen, and published by Eusebius and Pamphilus.

The

He was engaged in a controversy with Rufinus, a priest of Aquileia, concerning the works of Origen, the particular opinions of whom were warmly defended by Rufinus. In one instance, however, both Jerom and Rufinus agreed : The former encouraged the superstitious folly of Paula, who forsook her family and country for the conversation of monks and ecclesiastics in distant regions; and Rufinus himself accompanied Melania, another of these wandering saints, in her visits to the hermits of the Egyptian deserts, and remained during twenty-five years in her house at Jerusalem. The learning of Rufinus, though very considerable, was, however, inferior to that of Jerom. He translated several of the Greek authors into Latin; composed two books of Ecclesiastical History, in continuation of that of Eusebius; commentaries upon several parts of Scripture, and a number of other works.

The translation made by Jerom, from the Hebrew, for the use of the Latin church, met with great opposition for a considerable time. By degrees, however, it was used by the learned in their expositions, and distinguished by the name of the New Translation, in opposition to that of the Septuagint. Many of the learned suppose the present Latin translation, known by the name of the Vulgate, neither to be the ancient vulgar, nor Jerom's translation, but a mixture of both. The Psalms, in the present vulgate, are Jerom's translation, from the Septuagint of Lucian's emendation. The other books come nearer to the Hebrew than to the Septuagint. The old version of the Psalms continued to be read at Rome till Pius V. ordered Jerom's version, with amendments from the Septuagint, to be substituted.



The celebrated Augustin, bishop of Hippo, adopted in early youth, with a warmth congenial to his native country Africa, the opinions of the Manicheans. His sentiments, however, began to waver in a conference he held with Faustus, a professor of that sect, when he was about twenty-nine years of age; and the sermons of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, the conversion of two of his friends, and the persual of St. Paul's Epistles, fully convinced him of the errors of that sect. On his return to Africa, from which he had been absent some years in different parts of Italy, he was ordained priest by Valerius, bishop of Hippo, founded a monastery for persons who renounced private property and lived in common, and was ordained coadjutor to Valerius in 395. He died at the age of seventy-six. His works, which are more numerous than those of any other writer of this period, bear the marks of sincere piety, vivacity, and genius; but are chargeable with ambiguity, and the impulse of a too warm imagination. The opinions of Origen, who was claimed as an associate, at different times, both by the orthodox and Arian parties, had a zealous patron in the bishop of Hippo, for being a warm Platonist, he adopted every opinion of that philosopher, which could be reconciled with Christianity. He composed commentaries upon Scripture; sermons on a variety of subjects; discourses on the doctrines and discipline of the church, several books of controversy;



verſy; and an incredible number of other performances.

One of the moſt conſiderable writers of this period is John, biſhop of Conſtantinople, who flouriſhed towards the cloſe of the fourth, or the beginning of the 5th century. He was a native of Antioch, and obtained from his eloquence the name of Chryſoſtom \*. An aſſembly of biſhops having reſolved to enrol him in their body, he retired to the ſummit of a mountain in company with an old man; and afterwards entirely ſecluded himſelf in a dreary cave from all converſe with mankind. After remaining for ſome years in ſolitude, he returned to Antioch, where his reputation as a preacher became ſo great, that he was, by general conſent, elected patriarch of Conſtantinople. The ordination of Chryſoſtom was, however, ſecretly oppoſed by Theophilus, biſhop of Alexandria, who was deputed by the emperor to officiate in this ceremony, and whoſe fear of the monarch was too great to permit his reſuſal of the office. At this time the Conſtantinopolitan Arians were prohibited from holding their aſſemblies in the city, and departed from it every Saturday night or Sunday morning, reciting ſuch hymns as were conſonant to their doctrines. Chryſoſtom, ſenſible of the effect of ſuch ſpectacles upon the minds of the common people, turned againſt them their own arts, and diſpatched fingers through the ſtreets,

\* Golden-mouthed.

preceded by the cross and by lamps. In one of those processions the different parties met, and blows and a considerable tumult ensued; upon which, the emperor required from the Arians, either their conversion to orthodoxy, or their exile from the city. They preferred the latter. The enemies of Chrysostom, amongst whom was the empress Eudoxia, who was offended at his censuring the corrupt manners of the ladies in general, or perhaps displeased at his admonitions having been personally, publicly, and rather roughly addressed to her \*, conjointly with Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, who was offended at his interference in a dispute between him and the Nitrian monks, soon afterwards obtained his deposition; but the sedition consequent upon his banishment was so great, that the emperor was compelled to send him letters of recall. His implacable enemy, the empress, again irritated by his preaching against the public games around her statue, once more effected his banishment. He was not suffered to remain in peace in the place to which he had repaired in his exile, but received orders from the emperor to transport himself to the ungenial shores of the Euxine sea. The place of his banishment, however, he never reached; for he was seized with a violent fever on the road, which terminated his life in the sixtieth year of his age, in 407. Chrysostom is justly ranked amongst

\* *παρρησια* is the expression,

the most eminent Christian orators; his eloquence was manly, his genius was uncommon, and his erudition extensive. He exhibited himself both as a moral and controversial writer; wrote a great number of homilies; and his works are so extensive, as to have been collected into eleven folio volumes.

The religious controversies, which engaged in some measure the pens of the most accomplished writers of the fourth century, attracted the notice of men equally zealous, but not equally qualified, and produced several performances differing in merit according to the abilities of their respective authors. Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, and Eustathius, bishop of Antioch, though both of them intimate friends of Athanasius, were accused of Sabellianism, but wrote against the Arian cause. They were however both deposed, as their principles were judged, by the Synods appointed to try them, to be not perfectly orthodox. Victorinus engaged in defence of the Church, and attacked both the Arians and Manicheans. Amongst the most strenuous opposers of heresy was Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, who, from being a heathen, had been converted to Christianity. He composed a very extensive work against the Arians, which he had the spirit to present in person to the emperor Constantius; and wrote several commentaries upon different parts of the sacred writings. The compositions of the two Apollinaris's, in defence of Christianity, were written in such a style of elegance, that the emperor

Julian prohibited the reading of their books. The writings of Ephraim of Edessa against heresy, as well as his moral performances, appear in his own time to have been much esteemed.

The commentators of this century were many; amongst whom was the blind but learned Didymus, whose commentaries are lost. Diodorus, bishop of Tarsus, wrote commentaries also, which are ranked amongst those of the judicious few, who attempted to explain the literal sense of Scripture, without attending to the allegorical.

The lives of the monks became so acceptable, from the estimation in which they were held, that a multitude of romances, under that denomination, were produced in the fourth century; pretending to be authentic records of these deluded devotees. Epiphanius published a history of heresies, in which, not content with exhibiting and exaggerating erroneous opinions, he attempts to refute them, and to establish the doctrines of the church. This writer is charged with inaccuracy and extreme credulity; a credulity too of the worst sort, since it led him to believe every unfavourable account of those who dissented from his faith.

A multitude of writers, whose compositions were fewer in number, or who did not obtain the same celebrity with those already enumerated, flourished during this century: amongst these was Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, who, in his youth, composed discourses for the catechumens, and for those who were newly baptized.



## THE FIFTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Persecuting Edict against Heretics—Arcadius and Honorius—Incurfions of the Barbarians—Alaric—Plunder of Rome—Deftruction of Literature—Refpect indicated by the Barbarians for every Form of Chriftianity—Progress of the Barbarians—Annihilation of the Weftern Empire—Odoacer—State of the Eaftern Empire—Calamities affecting the Empire—Arianifm profefled by the Barbarians—Theodoric—Hunneric—Hilderic—Chriftianity received in Perfia—Chriftians there involved by their own Imprudence in Persecution—Complete Conversion of the Goths—Conversion of Ireland—Of Clovis, King of the Franks—Title of Moft Chriftian King—Corruptions of the Clergy—Their Arrogance—Encroachments of the Bifhop of Rome—Proftitution of Holy Orders—Impious Arrogance of the Emperors—Council of Chalcedon—Title of Patriarchs—Rivalfhip between the Bifhops of Rome and Conftantinople—Their Intrufion into Civil Affairs—Reftained by an Imperial Edict—Virtues of fome of the Clergy.*

**T**HE calamities ariifing from an intolerant zeal in matters of religion, not lefs fevere than the terrors of perfecution which had afflicted the

the Christians of the preceding century, continued in this to disturb the happiness of mankind, and to induce the sincere professors of the gospel to look back almost with regret to a season which, however unfavourable and perilous, found them united in one common cause, generally understood; instead of being divided into factions, disagreeing about points difficult to be conceived, and respecting which the difference frequently consisted not in the circumstance itself, but in the terms used to define it. Alarmed at the ecclesiastical censures which assailed whoever presumed to differ in opinion, or even in expression, from the leaders of the Church, the timid Christian must have been afraid of conversing upon the subject of his faith; and the edict obtained from Honorius, by four bishops deputed from Carthage, in 410, which doomed to death whoever differed from the Catholic faith, must, though perhaps never executed, have closed in terror and silence the trembling lips. Doubtless a mistaken zeal for promoting the cause of true religion, instigated the generality to believe it right to enforce the truth, not only by ecclesiastical censures, but by the interference of the civil power. Augustin acknowledged, that there had been a time when he believed it wrong to harass heretics, and that it would be more judicious to allure them by soft and gentle methods; but that his sentiments were changed, from observing, that the laws enacted against heresy by the emperors had proved, to many, an happy occasion of conversion.

sion \*. These detestable principles were carried to such excess, that, in 443, Theodosius commanded that the books which were not conformable in doctrine to the councils of Nice and Ephesus, and to the decisions of Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, should be destroyed, and their concealers be liable to death.

Under the united reigns of the two sons of Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius, who separately governed the eastern and western divisions of the Roman empire, a season of tranquillity took place, which was only interrupted by theological commotions. The death of Arcadius, in the year 403, placed his son Theodosius, at eight years of age, upon the Imperial throne, who governed the eastern division of the empire, while his uncle Honorius reigned in the west. The timid emperor of the west, alarmed at the incursions of the Barbarians, who poured down in swarms upon his dominions, and revelled in the delightful regions of Italy, had his retreat at Ravenna disturbed by the intelligence that Alaric, the Gothic king, had besieged Rome; nor was it long before the fierce conqueror entered its gates, and plundered that city, which for ages had been a repository for the plunder of the world. The remainder of Italy soon became a prey to the ravages of the victorious army. During this period, though the most ancient and valuable monuments of art and learning were levelled with the ground,

\* Epist. to Vincentius.

the churches of the Christians of every denomination were spared by this Arian invader; and not only life, but even liberty, was granted both to the Pagans and Christians who took refuge in the churches of the apostles, or at the tombs of the martyrs. The sacred vessels which had been pillaged from the church of St. Peter, were also restored by the conquerors. The subjects of Honorius, after a series of ineffectual contests against the desolating power of the Barbarians, had the mortification to see him nearly stripped of his territory, and continuing the title without the power of royalty. The capital was taken by the Goths; the Huns were possessed of Pannonia; the Alans, Suevi, and Vandals, were established in Spain; and the Burgundians settled in Gaul. The feeble powers of Valentinian the Third, the successor of Honorius, were not calculated to restore to the Roman monarchs the empire they had lost. Eudocia, his widow, and the daughter of Theodosius, soon married Maximus; and soon discovered that the present partner of her throne and bed was the brutal murderer of the last. Incensed at his perfidy, and resolved to revenge the death of Valentinian, and her own dishonour, she implored assistance from Genferic, king of the Vandals in Africa, who entered Rome, and plundered the whole of the city except three churches. After the rapid and turbulent reigns of several of the emperors of the west, that part of the empire was finally



finally subjugated in the year 476, by the abdication of Augustulus. The name of Emperor sunk with the ruin of the empire; for the conquering Odoacer, general of the Heruli, assumed only the title of King.

The inhabitants of the eastern empire, though less exposed to the irruptions of the Barbarians, during this century, than their brethren of the west, were not exempted from partial dangers and repeated alarms. Attila, king of the Huns (who afterwards destroyed the rich cities of Aquileia, Parma, and Milan), desolated the provinces of Illyria and Thrace. But the greatest miseries of this part of the empire arose, perhaps, from the strange opinions which were propagated in respect to the doctrines of religion; and the prevailing party uniformly exerted all their powers to depress and vilify their less fortunate brethren. To aggravate these afflictions, they were exposed in various places to severe local sufferings: a violent earthquake nearly destroyed the magnificent city of Antioch, and the country of Thrace; whilst the Hellespont suffered from a similar calamity. A considerable part of Constantinople was destroyed by fire; and various insurrections were excited in different parts of the empire.

It cannot be denied that the greater part of these evils attended the Christians, not on account of their religious faith, but as they were subjects of the empire; and that they rather belong to the  
history

history of the Empire than to that of the Church. But it must be remembered, that beside their sufferings as subjects, they were exposed to peculiar calamities, according to the religious profession of those who obtained the government ; and consequently, that the vicissitudes which beset the empire materially affected the happiness of the Church. The greater part of the barbarians who invaded the empire, though converts to Christianity, were Arians ; and the Consubstantialists had the utmost reason to apprehend from them such measures, as should involve them in persecution and calamity. The conduct of these fierce invaders was, however, in general much more tolerant than that of the orthodox emperors. Odoacer granted to the orthodox clergy full liberty of conscience, and the unmolested exercise of their religion ; and his successor Theodoric, a wise and excellent prince, continued, in the beginning of his reign, to protect all the rights and privileges of the orthodox. He appeared, indeed, extremely desirous to increase the respectability of the church. In consequence of the powers assumed by the Gothic princes, of nominating the clergy to their respective situations, he himself appointed the bishops of Rome, but was particularly careful to select the worthiest person to fill the vacant place. He put a stop also to all simoniacal ordinations, and respectfully desired the prayers of the Catholic clergy. Like Theodoric, Hunneric, king of the Vandals  
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in Africa, commenced his reign by acts of clemency towards the Catholics; but the close of their lives, particularly that of the latter, was marked by a persecuting spirit. Hilderic, another Vandal king, restored the privileges of the African Christians, and recalled their exiled bishops, though he refused to enter into their communion; and his example was at a later period imitated by the Vandal Gundabund \*. The Vandals, except in very few instances, abstained from offering any violence to the consciences of their subjects, and permitted the followers of the Nicene faith to believe, to teach, and to serve God, in their own way. The Gothic ambassadors declared too, that none under their subjection were ever compelled by violence to change their religion; and that the Goths themselves, if they were inclined to adopt the Nicene faith, were at full liberty to do it. Their princes, indeed, appear in general to have laid them under only one restriction, which was, that they should not enter into either the church or the monastic state without their permission. All these princes had embraced Arian opinions, from those who had at first propagated Christianity amongst them; and they had little leisure, and probably little inclination, to discuss the articles of their faith. The oppressions of the emperor Justin, with respect to every description of his heretic subjects, were only prevented by the threats of

\* Jortin, vol. iv. p. 319.

Theodoric to make reprisals for any persecutions excited against the Arians : and Pope Hormisda severely persecuted the Manicheans, and, after having them whipped, sentenced them to banishment.

Notwithstanding the commotions which afflicted the Empire and the Church, Christianity still continued to extend her boundaries. The truths of the Gospel were propagated through a considerable part of Persia, by Maruthas, a Mesopotamian, and Abdas, a Persian bishop, who afterwards involved the Christians in a severe persecution, by his temerity in destroying a temple belonging to the Magi, and his obstinacy in not rebuilding it. This persecution continued for some time, and was not terminated without a war between the Persians and Romans. The most considerable accessions to the Christian body, during this century, accrued from the barbarous nations which poured with the impetuosity of a torrent over every part of the western empire. The Goths had indeed professed Christianity before their irruption ; but the greater part of these savage invaders did not relinquish the worship of their gods, till they were established in the conquered countries, when Arianism was professed by the greater part of the western Christians. During the course of this century, Ireland was added to the countries which had already embraced the truths of Christianity. The first missionary, Palladius, was not successful amongst this rude and uncultivated



uncultivated people ; but he might probably prepare them to receive favourably the documents of Succathus, or Patrick, a native of Caledonia, a man of birth and abilities, who, after the laborious efforts of forty years for their conversion, founded the archbishopric of Armagh. One of the most remarkable conversions of the fifth century is that of Clovis, king of the Franks, who is said to have embraced Christianity, in consequence of a vow to worship Christ as his God, provided he rendered him victorious in a battle which he was preparing to engage in against the Alemanni. Probably his conversion might result at least as much from policy as superstition. By adopting the religious tenets of those whom he governed, he destroyed one capital cause of disunion. However this might have been, many miraculous circumstances were said to have attended this conversion of the conqueror, who founded the kingdom of the Franks in Gaul. On the occasion of his baptism at Rheims, a brilliant light filled the whole church ; and a voice was heard to say, *Peace be with you ; it is I : be not afraid : abide in my love.* This prodigy was succeeded by a fragrant odour which perfumed the whole place, and a dove descended, bearing a vial of chrism \*, with which Clovis was anointed †. This monarch was the only one of the

\* A composition of olive oil and balm ; *opobalsamum*.

† This piece of legerdemain, which Baronius has dignified with the name of a miracle, was exhibited in favour of a monarch,

the Barbarian invaders of the Roman empire, who immediately professed the faith of the Council of Nice; and from this circumstance, the appellation of the Most Christian King, and Eldest Son of the Church, was, according to the opinion of the learned, conferred originally upon the sovereigns of France.

Riches and independence, so little conducive to virtue in the hearts of men, were evidently pernicious to the clergy, who, from the time when they became possessed of great revenues under the Christian emperors, were no longer distinguished by the humble virtues of the primitive Christians; but by ardent aspirations and mean artifices to obtain temporal power. The episcopal offices were, in several instances, performed by delegates; whilst the bishop, who assumed the name, and received the emoluments annexed to that office, was left at leisure to attend to his secular concerns, and to dissipate in voluptuousness what had been frequently acquired by contention and chicane. The richer ecclesiastics not only vied in splendour with the prince; they not only erected thrones in their churches, and affected the state of courts, in giving audience to the people; but they frequently asserted a perfect equality with the monarch. Martin, bishop of Tours, contended, at a public entertainment, that the emperor was inferior in dignity

who was ferocious, sanguinary, and ambitious, and the murderer of several of his nearest relations.

to a presbyter ; and Anastasius, the emperor of the East, met with frequent instances of similar arrogance. Symmachus had the assurance to tell him, that the dignity of a Roman prelate, nay, even of a priest, was superior to that of the emperor, in proportion as the dignity of things spiritual was to that of things temporal.

The ecclesiastics of every denomination united in invading the rights of the people ; and in increasing, by every possible expedient, the power and dignity of the sacerdotal order : they employed also, without compunction, the most unlawful means in order to controvert each other, and to obtain fresh accessions of influence to their respective sees. Amongst the most ambitious claimants of prerogative and spiritual power, the see of Rome soon became the most distinguished ; it affected to receive all appeals that were preferred in ecclesiastical cases ; endeavoured to be considered as umpire in the dispute, and by its decisions to determine every clerical cause. The bishops of Africa warmly opposed these encroachments of the Roman see ; and contested the authority which the pope pretended to derive, for this end, from a decree of the Nicene Council, but which was not in their copies of the acts of that synod. They refused to re-admit Apianus, an African priest, who, upon being excommunicated by his bishop, had appealed to the Roman pontiff, by whom he had

been received into communion, and who attempted to restore him to his former station in the Church. Intriguing for the principal episcopal offices became common; and it frequently happened, that, upon the demise of a bishop, his see was claimed by two or more contenders, who endeavoured to enforce their pretensions by every martial exertion. The pulpit beat to arms, and the Church appeared a theatre of war, in which the angry combatants assailed each other with implacable rancour and fury. The see of Alexandria was remarkable for an almost uninterrupted succession of profligate prelates, who obtained their stations by the most atrocious means. Timotheus, after having caused his predecessor to be murdered in the church, his dead body dragged through the city, and the mangled carcase then thrown into the fire, obtained the bishopric by his artifice in creeping about in the dark, and pretending to be an angel, that he might delude the monks, and obtain the object of his wishes. The splendour of the principal sees under the Christian emperors, and the great possibility of their being attained by the illiterate and the ignorant, since knowledge was far from being requisite for admission into the priesthood, were causes which greatly contributed to the evils we are now lamenting\*. Incentives were by these

\* Several of the fathers of the Church, who attended the Councils



these means offered to the indolent enthusiast, as well as the ignorant and ambitious, to enter into the clerical order; to which they might be ordained without the trouble of preparing, or any examination, since none was made; and without finding it necessary to engage in any regular ecclesiastical duty. Hence, if knavishly disposed, each had, in the possession of his order, a passport from city to city; in each of which he might carry on the lucrative business of vending the pretended relics of the saints and martyrs to an ignorant and deluded multitude.

The emperors, who, in the last century, had constituted themselves heads of the Church, and had suffered themselves to be addressed by the impious titles of your divinity, your eternity, your godship, supreme master, and everlasting king, had still reserved to themselves the supreme ecclesiastical power; and in concert with the authority of councils, in which the legislative power of the Church immediately resided, sometimes augmented, and sometimes depressed, the authority of the contending and ambitious prelates. Two ge-

Councils of Ephesus, and Chalcedon, towards the middle of this century, were so ignorant as to be unable to write their own names to the acts of the Councils, but were compelled to subscribe in this form: *I, such an one, have subscribed by the hand of such an one, because I cannot write.* Or, *Such a bishop having said that he could not write, I, whose name is underwritten, have subscribed for him.* Jortin, vol. iv. p. 77.

neral or œcumenical councils were held, during this century, at Ephesus and at Chalcedon. In the latter, the bishop of Constantinople, who had reduced under his spiritual subjection several extensive provinces, was confirmed in the same privileges he had obtained in the council of Constantinople, and was considered as in all respects equal to his haughty rival, the bishop of Rome. But this regulation was little agreeable to the Roman pontiff, who saw his superiority invaded, and his dignity abased, with but little hope of obtaining redress, since the authority of the emperor was exerted in favour of his rival. He submitted not, however, silently to decisions which abrogated his rights, but opposed with energy the obstinate claims of the bishop of Constantinople to spiritual dominion. The contests which arose in consequence of the council of Chalcedon, fortunately supplied Felix the third, bishop of Rome, with a pretence for opposing his brother of Constantinople. This prelate had treated with contempt the decrees of that council, though it had confirmed to him the patriarchal power; and had manifested a desire to serve rather than to distress the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, the great leaders of the anathematized sect of the Monophysites. This afforded a pretext for convening a council, in which the Byzantine patriarch was condemned, who, in his turn, anathematized and excommunicated the bishop of Rome, erased his name from the public

diptychs \*, and mutual animosities inflamed the eastern and western churches for a series of years. The avowed causes of dispute were generally a zeal for the decision of councils, or for the support of particular opinions ; and under these pretences, the supremacy, which was unceasingly aimed at by the Roman pontiff, was opposed by the bishop of Constantinople, who, from similar motives, was opposed by the bishop of Rome, in all his claims to spiritual dominion. On this account every measure was devised, which could foment or increase any disturbance between the prelates of Constantinople and those who were subject to their jurisdiction. Every complaint, made by the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch against the patriarch of Constantinople, or even by the inferior orders of the clergy in those dioceses against their spiritual rulers, was eagerly received at Rome, and the complainants taken under the immediate protection of that see.

The aspiring views of Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem, were directed to the attainment of patriarchal power ; and the protection of the younger Theodosius enabled him to reject the authority of his metropolitan, the bishop of Cæsarea, and to assume the dignity of patriarch of Palestine, in

\* The Diptychs were originally public registers, in which the names of the consuls and other principal magistrates among the Romans were inscribed. The Diptychs of the Church contained the names of the bishops, and other distinguished persons.

which he was afterwards confirmed. The principal reason assigned for this assumption, was, that the Church of Jerusalem had always deservedly received a high degree of veneration, from its having succeeded to the first Christian society founded by the Apostles ; and had in itself an innate and incontrovertible claim to the privileges it required. The Church of Antioch suffered still further from the increasing spirit of ambition and zeal for episcopal honours. Instigated by these motives, and availing himself of the prevalent spirit of superstition, Anthemius, bishop of Salamis, affected to have discovered, by revelation, the body of Saint Barnabas, which had upon its breast the gospel of Saint Matthew, in Greek, transcribed by Saint Barnabas himself. This discovery he made use of, to prove that his see, being founded by Barnabas, was an Apostolic Church, no less than that of Antioch ; and, as such, ought not to be subject to that patriarch : so powerful a plea procured him an exemption. The Churches of Antioch and Alexandria soon began also to suffer from the usurpations and claims of the Constantinopolitan and Jerusalem prelates, and particularly of the former, who arrogantly reduced them under his jurisdiction.

A detail of the artifices made use of by the patriarchs, for the attainment of spiritual powers, would be little edifying, and may be easily conceived. They encroached upon the rights of the bishops, whom they considered as delegated by  
 them,



them, and in all respects amenable to their authority. This power they contrived to augment by artfully exciting quarrels between the bishops and the inferior ministers, and between the clergy and people, each of whom referred the dispute to their decision. To complete their spiritual tyranny, they contracted an alliance, founded in mutual interest, with a band of crafty, of insolent, and unprincipled monks.

The authority of the Roman prelates in the west had been considerably increased by the supineness of the emperors, and the grant which had been obtained by the ambitious Leo, from Valentinian, that all the western bishops should be subject to his jurisdiction. Their power was not diminished by the dominion of the barbarous nations, who, perceiving the subjection of the people to the clergy, and the dependence of the clergy upon the Roman Pontiff, soon became sensible, that by augmenting his power they secured their own.

The appointment of legates from the Pope\*, who about the middle of this century first began to reside at the court of Constantinople, doubtless originated from motives extremely opposite to those which were avowed. Leo recommended to the emperor Marcian a person named Julian, who was established by him to solicit at the emperor's court

\* The name *Papa* (Pope) was originally given to all bishops, and even sometimes to the inferior clergy. Bingham, book i. chap. 2.

whatever related to the faith and peace of the Church against heretics. But a regard to faith and discipline was doubtless not the sole object of their attention. The bishop of Rome was too much interested in the prosperity of his see, not to be very sedulous in observing every circumstance relating to the other prelates (particularly his brother of Constantinople), which might be prejudicial to his own interest and dignity. The tender concern of these reverend brethren was indeed exerted to promote good order in every part of the Christian world; and was charitably extended so far beyond the limits of ecclesiastical authority, that they frequently interfered in matters of civil jurisdiction. Valentinian promulgated a law which restrained their power to spiritual and ecclesiastical causes; but, in these, their authority extended to all ranks and degrees of men.

Notwithstanding the depravity and corruption which pervaded the clerical body, the whole was not contaminated. Instances of disinterested virtue, which would have reflected splendour upon the most enlightened periods of society, illuminated the dreary and dismal annals of the fifth century. We behold with veneration and with pleasure the liberal Deogratias, bishop of Carthage, selling the costly plate of the church for the ransom of a number of captives, who had been brought by Geisericus, the Vandalic king, to the shores of Africa, where they were to be torn from every dear and  
social

social connection. We accompany him with delight to his church, filled with beds of straw for the accommodation of the wretched strangers; and with transport behold this aged and infirm prelate daily comforting the sick, giving food to the hungry, and medicines to the diseased. Nor was this a solitary instance of public and private virtue: it was even exceeded by Acacius, bishop of Amida, who ransomed seven thousand Persian captives perishing with hunger. History, amongst her disagreeable obligations to record so much of the vices of mankind—for vice, if it does not preponderate in the scale, is generally more apparent and obtrusive than virtue—has sometimes the delight of exhibiting characters which dignify and exalt human nature. The erudition, piety, and truly Christian charity of Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, who distributed liberally not only to the orthodox, but to the necessitous heretics—the still greater mildness of Proclus, his friend and disciple, towards the heretics, and his active as well as passive virtues—the piety, simplicity, and affability of Sicinius, a Constantinopolitan prelate—are instances of human excellence, which it is pleasant to record, and may serve as models worthy of imitation to more refined and succeeding ages.

## CHAP. II.

OF GOVERNMENT, DOCTRINE, RITES, AND CEREMONIES IN THE FIFTH CENTURY.

*Title and Dignity of Patriarch conferred on five of the principal Sees—Increase of Monks—Exempted from Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction—Their immense Power—Crimes—Warlike Achievements—New Order of Watchers—Absurdities—Savage Life—Symeon Stylites—Pillar Saints—Fanaticism of Baradatus and James of Syria—Platonism succeeded by the Philosophy of Aristotle—Increasing Respect for the Virgin Mary—Miracles supposed to be wrought by her—Images of the Virgin and the Saints—Superstitious Reverence for the Sacrament—Change of public to private Confession—Incense and Tapers used in the Church—Rage for accumulating Relics—Seven Sleepers—Miracle of the Orthodox Believers, who spoke after the Loss of their Tongues—Divination—Feast of the Ascension—Origin of the Pope's Tiara.*

THOUGH the bishops of Rome, partly by the force of an ancient prejudice in favour of that imperial city, and partly by the wealth and power of that church, had in the preceding century been enabled to assume a degree of superiority over the other metropolitan churches; and though the council of Constantinople had raised the bishop of that see to an equality of power and authority with the Roman prelate, yet the title of Patriarch does not appear to have been regularly conferred upon



upon them till the meeting of the council of Chalcedon, in 451 ; nor were the jurisdiction and dignity of the patriarchal sees, before that period, properly established and defined. The patriarchal dignity was also obtained by the bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem ; but these latter were held in an inferior light to those of Rome and Constantinople \*. The title of Exarch was conferred

\* The powers of the patriarchs differed materially. The patriarch of Alexandria possessed the peculiar prerogative of consecrating and approving every bishop throughout the province of his diocese. This was owing to his rights as a metropolitan, which authorised him, with a synod of his provincial bishops, to consecrate all the bishops within his province ; and his diocese, when he became a patriarch, being in no respect extended, he continued his custom of ordaining, though new metropolitans were instituted under him. The privileges of the patriarchs were many. They ordained the metropolitans of their dioceses, but they were themselves ordained by a diocesan synod. They convened and presided in the synods of their dioceses. They had the privilege of receiving appeals from the sentences of the metropolitans and provincial synods, while no appeal lay from their decisions. They were also invested with the power of inquiring into the administration of the metropolitans, of correcting and censuring their decrees, and of sending delegates into any part of the diocese, to hear and determine ecclesiastical causes in their name. They were consulted by the metropolitans in all important affairs, and published all ecclesiastical laws. The patriarchs were originally independent on each other, and their number amounted to thirteen or fourteen ; till the see of Rome by encroachments, and the see of Constantinople by law, obtained a superiority over their neighbours. The eastern patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Cæsarea, and Constantinople, were never subjected

ferred upon those who had the inspection of the affairs of the Church, in certain provinces. The principal transactions relating to these establishments were detailed in the preceding chapter.

Few, if any, alterations took place during this century, in the state of the clergy ; if we except the monks, who daily increased both in consequence and in fanaticism. Originally subject to the bishop of the diocese, they could not even choose their own superior without his consent. This privilege was, however, towards the beginning of this century, obtained by most of the communities ; and it was soon followed by an exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. When indeed the Popes acquired the power of granting these exemptions, they frequently gave or sold them to the monks, whose power consequently increased with that of the Roman see, and whose attachment to its interest was by this means secured. In the fifth century, the monastic orders did not all observe the same form of discipline ; but in one respect they nearly agreed, which was in a general defection

to Rome. The patriarchs of Ephesus and Cæsarea became subject to Constantinople ; and, under the name of Exarchs, sat and voted in general councils next to the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. There were however some exceptions to the power of the patriarchs ; as in the case of the metropolitans of Cyprus, Iberia, Armenia, and Britain, who conducted their affairs with their provincial synods, without being accountable to any superior. Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq. lib. ii. c. 18.*

from

from real virtue, and the practice of such licentiousness as became proverbial \*. The prelates at the council of Chalcedon, in 451, complained of Barsumas the monk, who had murdered Flavian, his bishop, that he had overturned all Syria, and brought against them a thousand monks †. In 452, Theodosius, a monk, on pretence of maintaining orthodoxy, incited the monks of Palestine to rise, filled Jerusalem with tumults, set fire to several houses, broke open jails, murdered a bishop, with some other persons, and caused himself to be elected bishop of Jerusalem ‡.

The approbation of monastic institutions was not only extensively diffused, and numbers made unhappy from the defection of their relations, and the consequent loss of their support ; but the more judicious part of the community had the mortification to observe, that, as the numbers who embraced the state of monachism sensibly increased, so also monastic folly increased in the same proportion. In the beginning of this century a new order of monks was instituted by a person of the name of Alexander, who obtained the name of Watchers, from their method of performing divine service without any intermission. They divided themselves into three classes, which relieved each other at stated hours ; and by that means con-

\* Sulpit. Severus, Dial. i. c. 8.

† Jortin, vol. iv. p. 295.

‡ Jort. iv. 296.

tinued, without any interval, a perpetual course of divine service \*. Amongst the Mystics, many not only affected to reside with wild and savage beasts, but imitated their manners. With a ferocious aspect they traversed the gloomy desert, fed upon herbs and grass, or remained motionless in certain places for several years, exposed to the scorching heat of the mid-day sun, or the chilling blasts of the nocturnal air. All conversation with men was studiously avoided by these gloomy fanatics, who frequently concluded their lives by an act of violent madness, or shut themselves up in narrow and miserable dens, to howl out the remainder of their wretched existence. About the year 427, Symeon, a Syrian, introduced a refinement in mortification, by residing successively upon five pillars, of six, twelve, twenty-two, thirty-six, and lastly of forty cubits high. In this wretched state he continued during thirty-seven years of his life ; and his sublime piety was at his decease eagerly emulated by one Daniel, a monk, who resided upon the top of a pillar, and died in that situation at the advanced age of eighty. With a

\* Many monasteries were erected for this order in Constantinople ; and Studius, a man of consular dignity, forsaking the world, entered into their society, and built for them an elegant monastery, which was named Studium, and the monks who resided in it, Studitæ ; which is perhaps the first instance of that body deriving their appellation from their founder. As many of these monks embraced the tenets of Nestorius, the order in a short time sunk rapidly in its credit.



severity of sentiment consonant to the gloomy austerity of his life, Symeon angrily condemned the clemency and humanity of Theodosius junior, who had commanded the Christians of Antioch to rebuild for the Jews a synagogue there, which they had insolently destroyed; and his influence, arising from the reputation of his sanctity, was such, that his arguments prevented its restoration. Such indeed was the reputation of Symeon, that he was eagerly resorted to by a multitude of pious pilgrims, from the remote countries of Spain, Gaul, and Britain.—The pillar saints continued to preserve their celebrity in the east till the twelfth century; but this practice, like all the other extremes of monkish fanaticism, was never so general in the west\*.

Amongst the ingenious inventors of methods for destroying the happiness of mankind, Baradatus, a monk of Syria, and James, another of the same fraternity, have been highly distinguished for their piety and virtue. The former of these holy brethren, aspiring after a more perfect species of self-denial than he had for some time practised in a small and uncomfortable chamber; erected for himself upon the summit of a mountain, a box so contrived as not to admit of his standing in a perpendicular posture, and which, having no close

\* Those who imitated the example of Symeon were called Stylitæ by the Greeks, and Sancti Columnares by the Latins. Dr. Jortin has baptised them by the name of *Holy Birds*.

cover, exposed him to all the inclemencies of the wind, the rain, and the sun. Wearied, perhaps, at length himself, or having exhausted the attention of others, by his continuance in this situation, he again attempted to excite it by fresh devices. For this purpose, he contrived to be raised from his supine posture, and continually stood upright, covered with a garment of skin, with only a small aperture in his box sufficient to allow of his drawing his breath, and stretching out his hands to heaven. His contemporary, James, not less disposed to austerity, fed entirely upon lentils, dragged about a load of heavy iron chains bound about his waist and neck, from which several others were suspended. During three days and nights, in which, in continued prostration, he offered up his prayers, this admired maniac was so covered with the snow as to be scarcely discernible. False miracles were perpetually reported, to complete the triumph of fanaticism, and the total infatuation of the multitude; and they were referred to, by some of the most eminent Fathers of the Church, not only as examples of Christian perfection, but as infallible authorities for the validity of particular doctrines.

The principles of Christianity, no longer distinguished by their simplicity, good sense, and sound philosophy, were in this century still more embarrassed by intricate disputes, subtle explanations, and rash decisions. The Platonic doctrines, aided by the approbation and opinions of Origen, con-

continued still to be maintained by considerable numbers ; but this system, at the time that Origenism was condemned, was deserted by numbers, who were desirous of avoiding the imputation of those errors ; and the philosophy of Aristotle was embraced in its place, and compounded in the same manner with the doctrines of revelation. The prevailing attachment to logical discussions, subtile distinctions, and captious sophisms, contributed to increase the fondness for the Aristotelian philosophy, which was more calculated for these ends than even Platonism had been. Composed of artificial and learned jargon, of obscure, doubtful, and undefined terms, it involved not only the ignorant and illiterate, but the ingenious and inquisitive, in intricate disputes concerning unintelligible terms, and entangled them in an inextricable labyrinth of words.

An increasing veneration for the Virgin Mary had taken place in the preceding century ; and, very early in this, an opinion was industriously propagated, that she had manifested herself to several persons, and had wrought considerable miracles in support of the consubstantial party. Her image, holding in her arms the infant Jesus, together with the images of those who during their residence on earth had acquired the reputation of superior sanctity, was honoured with a distinguished situation in the church, and in many places invoked with a peculiar species of worship, which was supposed to draw down into the images

the propitious presence of the saints or celestial beings they represented\*. A superstitious respect began also to take place for the bread consecrated for the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Its efficacy was supposed to extend as well to the body as the soul; and it was applied as a medicine in sickness, and as a preservative against every danger in travelling, whether by land or by sea. As it frequently happened that those, who believed in the efficacy of the consecrated bread, might not have provided themselves with a quantity sufficient for these emergencies, it became customary for the priests to reserve a portion to distribute according

\* This excessive respect for images was ineffectually opposed by Xenaïas, bishop of Hierapolis, who incurred great detestation on that account. Vigilantius, a Spanish presbyter, extended his censures of the popular modes of superstition to a greater length, and was proportionably more abhorred; and the name of Vigilantius has, on account of this opposition, been transmitted to posterity in the list of heretics, and accompanied with all the rancour of the furious Jerom.

Pictures had been introduced into churches in the preceding century. Paulinus, bishop of Nola, rebuilt, in a splendid manner, his own church, which was dedicated to the martyr Felix; and had the miracles of Moses, and of Christ, together with the acts of St. Felix, and of some other martyrs there deposited, painted in the porticos. They prevailed however at that time more in the east than in the west, and Chrysostom speaks of pictures in the church. In the beginning however of the 5th century, an Italian bishop offered a very plausible apology for having them painted in his church, by saying that the amusement the people might receive from the pictures, might occupy the time which they would perhaps otherwise spend in regaling themselves. Priestley's *Corruptions*, vol. ii. p. 13.



to the necessities of their superstitious flock. Several of the Christians interred a quantity of it in the sepulchres of their departed relations; and, although this practice was opposed in the council of Carthage, it still continued to be esteemed and practised not only in this, but in succeeding centuries. The increasing respect, which was paid to the elements of the sacrament, was productive of a superstitious fear of receiving them unworthily; and the memorial of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, which had formerly been celebrated by all Christians on every Lord's day, was now attended by very few of the numberless professors of Christianity.

Amongst the alterations which took place in the discipline of the Church, none was more remarkable than the suppression of all public confessions of sin, by Leo the Great, in all the churches subject to his jurisdiction. These confessions, which had been formerly made by the trembling penitent before the assembled congregation, were now appointed to be made to a single priest; a regulation which, though it artfully extended the power of the clergy over the consciences of men, considerably destroyed the rigour of ancient discipline. Penance was allowed to be performed in monasteries, or in the presence of a few individuals, and in a private place, at the discretion of the bishop. But if the external splendour of the Church was in some degree lessened by this alteration, the loss



was amply supplied by additional ceremonies. The method of singing anthems, one part of which was performed by the clergy, and the other by the congregation, which had been introduced into the churches of Antioch in the preceding century, was, in this, practised at Rome; and in many churches it was the custom to perform these responses night and day, without any interruption; different choirs of singers continually relieving each other. The privileges of sanctuary, which had been claimed in the preceding century, were in this fully allowed by the emperor Leo. This claim has been supposed to have been materially advanced by a criminal flying for protection to a monastery, of which St. Marcellus was the abbot, who refused to surrender the refugee, though the soldiers, who surrounded the monastery during the night, waited only for the approach of morning to enter the convent, and forcibly to take possession of their victim. But a pretended miracle was interposed, to declare the sanctity of this place of refuge; a fire was seen to issue from the top of the building, which like flashes of lightning darted its rays at the impious soldiery, and impelled them trembling to lay down their arms, and immediately to implore the mercy of that Deity whom they had so impiously offended.

Every splendid appendage which had graced the heathen ceremonies, was now interwoven into the fabric of Christianity. During the ex-

tended period of Paganism, superstition had entirely exhausted her talents for invention ; so that, when the same spirit pervaded the minds of the Christians, they were necessarily compelled to adopt the practices of their predecessors, and to imitate their idolatry. That which had been formerly the test of Christianity, and the practice which, when avoided, exposed the primitive believer to the utmost vengeance of his enemies, was become a Christian rite ; and incense, no longer considered as an abomination, smoked upon every Christian altar. The services of religion were, even in the day, performed by the light of tapers and flambeaux. The discovery of relics, as may naturally be supposed, was proportioned to the desire of obtaining them. No fewer than the remains of forty martyrs were discovered to the pious but credulous Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius. This princess, with her attendants, on approaching the place where these bodies, according to the revelation with which she had been favoured, were deposited, had the ground broken open ; and one of the emperor's retinue, upon thrusting a reed into the chasm, and drawing it up again, was delighted with its exquisite odour. The princess, accompanied by the bishop, then approached, and discovered a considerable quantity of precious ointment, and two silver boxes which contained the inestimable relics of the martyrs, which she honoured with a magnificent shrine, and

deposited near the remains of the holy Thyrsus, who, she believed, had thrice appeared to her for the purpose of discovering the place where the martyrs were interred. The undecayed body of the prophet Zachariah was likewise said to have been found, in consequence of a revelation from himself, after it had been interred about twelve hundred years; and the relics of Samuel were removed by Arcadius from Jerusalem to Constantinople. The pretended remains of St. Stephen, of Nicodemus, of Gamaliel, and of several others, made their appearance about the same time; but the exhibition in detail of such knavery and folly, as accompanied these transactions, would afford little amusement, and still less advantage. The account of the seven persons who fled from the persecution of Decius into a solitary cave near Ephesus (where, after a repose of an hundred and ninety-five years, they awaked as vigorous, and in appearance as youthful, as when they entered it) is familiar to all, and will not in this enlightened age be considered as a matter which admits of dispute\*. One of the miracles of this century, however,

\* The trite remark, that a story loses nothing by telling, will in no instance more pertinently apply than in this; for however absurd the tale of the Seven Sleepers hath been deemed, yet, strip it of its legendary trappings, and the absurdity will at once vanish. It is no uncommon thing, even in our own climate, to find dead bodies, which have resisted, by means of a skilful preparation, the ordinary process of dissolution, for a much longer period

however, appears to occupy a better ground ; and much controversy has arisen concerning the orthodox

riod than that here assigned. It requires therefore no great stretch of faith, to believe that the bodies of these seven martyrs might, in consequence of being properly embalmed, have been found uncorrupted, and their limbs flexible. That their sleep was that of death, is obvious to be inferred ; for not only in the Scriptures \* is death denominated a state of sleep, but particularly in the language of their time †. Thus a burying-place was termed κοιμητηριον, cœmeterium, that is, a preservative of those who sleep, from κοιμᾶω, to sleep, and τηρεω, to preserve. But a passage from Prudentius is full to the point :

Venient cito sæcula, quum jam  
Socius calor ossa revifat,  
Animataque sanguine vivo  
Habitacula pristina gesset.

Quæ pigra cadavera pridem  
Tumulis putrefacta jacebant,  
Volucres rapientur in auras,  
Animas comitata priores.

Hinc maxima cura sepulcris  
Impenditur : hinc resolutos  
Honor ultimus accipit artus,  
Et funeris ambitus ornat.

\* Amongst the many passages of Scripture which authorize this language, are the following : Dan. xii. 2. John, v. 28, 29. Matth. xxvii. 52. John, xi. 11. 13. Jerem. li. 39. Psalm. xvii. 15. Rom. iv. 17. Luke, xx. 36, 37, 38.

† It is in congruity with the idea of death being a state of sleep, that in the damnatory sentence of the Athanasian Creed (which creed was introduced into the English church so early as the tenth century) the words *he shall perish everlastingly* are rendered, according to the Saxon version, *he shall not AWAKE*.



thodox confessors, who, after having been deprived of their tongues by the orders of Hunneric, were

Candore nitentia claro  
Prætendere lintea mos est,  
Asperfaque myrrha fabæo  
Corpus medicamine servet.

Quidnam sibi faxa cavata,  
Quid pulchra volunt monumenta ?  
Nisi quod res creditur illis  
Non mortua sed data fomno ?

Hoc provida Chrificolarum  
Pietas studet, utpote credens  
Fore protinus omnia viva,  
Quæ nunc gelidus sopor urget.

Analogous also to our purpose is the further observation of Arevali, who, in his comment on the passage, after citing from Victorinus the epitaph of Alexander the Martyr, *ALEXANDER MORTUUS NON EST, SED VIVIT SUPER ASTRA*, adds:—*Multa alia assert, ut probet, sanctos illos, dormientes nuncupatos, vere mortuos fuisse et martyrio coronatos.* In the very curious museum of Cardinal Borgia at Veletri, are extant on an ancient glass the figures of these seven sleeping saints, each distinguished by the instrument with which his death was inflicted, and also by his name. Their names were Constantine, Maximian, Martinian, John, Malchus, Sarapio, and Dionysius. In Strutt's *Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, pl. ii. the Seven Sleepers are introduced symbolically to ascertain the day when the event which is the subject of the illumination happened; but in this sense it alludes to them as in that sleep to which the resurrection unto life refers.—“Seynt Edward, par la grace Dieu, vist le jour de PAIKE (Easter) al manger, les vii dormanz turner lur destre cottes sur lur fenestre en gre. Et cet jour Godwyne Conte de Kent morust a la table, estrangle de un morsel.” H.

all,

all, except two of them, enabled to proclaim aloud the triumphs of orthodoxy over the imperfect faith of the Arians. Attested as this anecdote is by respectable witnesses, we can scarcely doubt the fact : but our belief of the *miracle* will be at least suspended, by the consideration that two of these confessors did not again attain the faculty of speech; and the knowledge that instances have occurred, in which persons who were deprived of a part of their tongues were still able to utter intelligible sounds \*. Whoever indeed considers the nature of the miracles during the fifth century ; that it was a period of credulity and ignorance † ; that the most eminent Fathers of the Church were not ashamed to propagate any story which was calculated to confirm the faith of the multitude ; that, unlike the first preachers of Christianity, they related circumstances which they saw not themselves, but received from different, and frequently disagreeing, narrators ; that they had much to gain by the propagation of false miracles, and little to fear from their detection ; that they advanced their own reputation for piety, and their own in-

\* We are informed in the *Chronicum Saxonicum*, that Pope Leo III. was deposed by the Romans, who cut out his tongue, and pulled out his eyes, in 697 ; yet that he both saw and talked afterwards as well as before. Jort. ii. 145.

† Austin observes that, in this century, many, in ipsa vera religione, were superstitious, and worshippers of sepulchres and pictures. H.

terests, by deception ; and that miracles were wrought, not for the advancement of pure and genuine Christianity, but to dignify obscure doctrines, or to exalt the character of some pretended saint ; in short, that every mark which authenticated the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, is wanting in these ; will probably be inclined not merely to hesitate in his assent to them, but will rather be disposed to reject them altogether, and with the indignation such blasphemous frauds deserve.

The compliance with every Pagan superstition which could be at all reconciled with Christianity, was extended on all occasions to the utmost excess. Amongst others, the Christians attempted to obtain a knowledge of futurity, by methods similar to those employed by the Pagans, who used to divine by opening the books of Virgil ; and the first verses which arrested their attention were interpreted into a prediction of their destiny. The accidental prognostication of the future greatness of Adrian, who opened at the words *Missus in Imperium magnum* ; and of Alexander Severus, who had a similar fortune, had conferred additional credit upon this mode of divination. Instead however of divining by the *Sortes Virgilianæ*, the Christians made use of a Bible for the same purpose ; and the practice was carried so far, that many of the inferior clergy found in it a very lucrative trade. By the higher ranks it was however strongly opposed ; and a decree was passed, in 465, by the council of Vannes,

Vannes, enacting that whoever was detected in the practice, should be excluded from communion with the Church. The pilgrimages to the tombs of the martyrs continued to increase in respectability during this century; and almost the commencement of it was remarkable for a procession, instituted by Chrysostom, which afforded an example, and served as a prelude, to future ceremonies of a similar nature.

Three days of fasting and supplication, before the feast of the Ascension, were instituted in France, by Mamercus, bishop of Vienne, who appropriated litanies\* to them, which were already in use, but not recited at any particular times; and reserved, as emergencies might require, for deprecating any impending calamity. The feast of the Ascension took place in the period of time which passed between the solemn seasons of Easter and Pentecost, and which had hitherto been observed as a season of festivity, in which all fasting and kneeling were prohibited. This fast was far from being universally received in the western churches, and never obtained in the eastern, which always observed the fifty days between Easter and Whitsuntide as a festival. There is some reason for believing that these rogation days were observed in Africa prior to this period; and that Mamercus was the adopter, not the institutor, of this observ-

\* The word Litany was anciently not applied to any peculiar form of prayer, but to prayer in general.



ance. From France the custom was generally adopted, though with some variation in the time in which it was observed; and it was in the year 511 established in the council of Orleans. By degrees these litanies were commonly used on Wednesdays and Fridays in all the churches. The liturgies however still differed, in different places, at the pleasure of the bishops. Peter the Fuller, bishop of Antioch, commanded that, in singing the hymn Trisagium \*, the performers should add to the words, "O God, most holy," *who hast suffered for us upon the cross!* † Another instance occurs in the mission of Lupus and Germanus, who, at the desire of the orthodox, were sent into Britain to oppose Pelagianism; and who introduced there the Gallican liturgy, which materially differed from that of Rome.

It was not till towards the close of this century that the bishop of Rome was distinguished by a dress materially different from that of the other

\* According to one of the wonderful relations of this century, during an earthquake at Constantinople, a boy was taken up into heaven, where he had the felicity of hearing the angels sing in Greek the Trisagium; the words of which, on his return to earth, he repeated to Proclus, his bishop. "If Greek be the language spoken in heaven," says Dr. Jortin, "it is bad news for our enthusiastical preachers, who know nothing of that tongue."

† Hence it was thought, and is probable, that he held the absurd error of the Theopaschitæ, who maintained that God himself suffered. H.

ecclesiastics.

ecclesiastics. He wore upon his head a kind of bonnet, something higher than usual, and constructed like the mitres used by the priests of Cybele. But Clovis having sent to St. John of Lateran a crown of gold, with which he had been presented by Anastasius, emperor of the East, Pope Hormisdas placed it upon his bonnet. In succeeding ages this ornament was increased. Boniface the Eighth, during his contentions with Philip the Fair, in order to demonstrate the superiority of things spiritual to things temporal, and as a mark of his twofold authority, added a second crown, which in the pontificate of John XXII. received the addition of a third.

## C H A P. III.

## OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE FIFTH CENTURY.

*Pelagius and Celestius—opposed by Augustin and others—Semi-Pelagians—Nestorians—Opposition of Cyril—Condemnation of Nestorius—Character of Nestorius—Eutychians—Condemnation in the Council of Chalcedon—Decree of Union called Henoticon—Monophysites—Peter the Fuller—Theopaschites—Acephali.*

THE fifth century is less remarkable than any of the preceding, for the number of those who, by the propagation of new opinions, perplexed and destroyed the tranquillity of the church. One of the earliest and most remarkable was Pelagius, a British monk, of some rank, and very exalted reputation; who, with his friend Celestius, travelled to Rome, where they resided very early in this century, and opposed with warmth the doctrines of original sin, and the necessity of divine grace.

What reception their doctrines met with at Rome, does not appear; but their uncommon piety and virtue excited general approbation. On the approach of the Goths, they retired to Africa, where Celestius remained, with a view of gaining admittance as a presbyter into the church of Carthage. Pelagius proceeded to Palestine, where he enjoyed

enjoyed the favour and protection of John bishop of Jerusalem. But his friend and his opinions met with a very different reception from Augustin, the celebrated bishop of Hippo.

Whatever parts were visited by these un-orthodox friends, they still asserted their peculiar opinions ; and they were gradually engaged in a warm contest, in the course of which they were probably led to advance more than had originally occurred to them. In contending for the truth of their doctrines, they asserted, “ that mankind derived no injury from the sin of Adam ; that we are now as capable of obedience to the will of God, as he was ; that, otherwise, it would have been cruel and absurd to propose to mankind the performance of certain duties, with the sanction of rewards, and the denunciation of punishments ; and that consequently men are born without vice, as well as without virtue.” Pelagius is said moreover to have maintained, “ that it is possible for men, provided they fully employ the powers and faculties with which they are endued, to live without sin ;” and though he did not deny, that external grace, or the doctrines and motives of the Gospel, are necessary, he is said to have rejected the necessity of internal grace, or the aids of the Divine Spirit. He acknowledged “ that the power we possess of obeying the will of God, is a divine gift ;” but asserted, “ that the direction of this power depends upon ourselves ; that natural death is not a consequence



of the sin of Adam, but of the frame of man; and that Adam would have died, though he had not sinned." Isidore, Chrysostom, and Augustin, strenuously opposed these opinions; and the latter procured their condemnation in a synod held at Carthage, in 412. They were, however, favourably received at Rome; and Pope Zozimus was at the head of the Pelagian party: But his decision against the African bishops, who had opposed Pelagianism, was disregarded by them, and the pontiff yielded at length to their reasonings and remonstrances, and condemned the men, whom he had before honoured with his approbation. The council of Ephesus likewise condemned the opinions of Pelagius and Celestius; and the emperor Honorius, in 418, published an edict, which ordained that the leaders of the sect should be expelled from Rome, and their followers exiled. Some of the Pelagians taught that Christ was a mere man, and that men might lead sinless lives, because Christ did so—that Jesus became Christ after his baptism, and God after his resurrection; the one arising from his unction, the other from the merit of his passion \*. The Pelagian controversy, which began with the doctrines of grace and original sin, was extended to predestination, and excited continual discord and division in the Church.

\* Cassian De Incarnatione, lib. i. c. 3. p. 966. 1017, 1018, 1066.

The warmth with which Augustin opposed the doctrines of Pelagius, betrayed him into expressions which too much favoured the belief, that the virtuous and evil actions of men arise from an invincible necessity in their natures; and he appeared to be of opinion, that, in the work of conversion and sanctification, all was to be attributed to a divine energy, and nothing to human agency. This opinion, though it had many favourers, was opposed by a still more considerable number, and a sect called Semi-Pelagians was founded, in which the doctrines both of Pelagius and Augustin were in part acceded to, and in part denied. Cassian, the head and founder of this sect, taught—*that the first conversion of the soul to God was the effect of its free choice*; consequently, that no *preventing or predisposing grace* is bestowed by him. Different writers have described the doctrines of the Semi-Pelagians in a different manner: some represent them as maintaining, that inward grace is not necessary to the beginning of repentance, but to our progress in virtue; others say, that they acknowledged the power of grace, but contended that faith depends upon ourselves, and good works upon God: all however agree, that the Semi-Pelagians believed that predestination is made upon the foresight of good works. The five following principles have been laid down as the foundation of the Semi-Pelagian doctrines—That God did not dispense his grace to one more than to another,

ther, in consequence of predestination, but was willing to save all, if they complied with the terms of the gospel; that Christ died for all; that the grace purchased by Christ, and necessary to salvation, was offered to all; that man, before he received grace, was capable of faith and holy desires; that man, born *free*, was consequently capable of *resisting* or *complying* with the suggestions of grace\*.

Notwithstanding the opposition of Augustin, the Semi-Pelagian doctrines were well received, particularly in the neighbourhood of Marseilles, where Cassian had founded a monastery. They were condemned in several synods; but still continued to be professed by the eastern Christians; and were generally received in the west, till the middle of the ninth century. The disputes, concerning liberty and necessity, have always produced much rancour and controversy in the Christian world, and are perhaps indeterminable by our limited faculties.

Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, was a zealous opponent of the opinions of Apollinaris, who had taught that the person of Christ was composed of an union of the Divinity with a human body, which was endued with a sensitive, not a rational soul: he particularly condemned the phrase which had been applied, by the followers of that heresy, to

\* Dr. Maclean's Note to Mosh. Ecc. Hist. cent. v. part 2. c. 5.

the Virgin Mary, whom they styled the *Mother of God*. The Byzantine prelate was led to take an active part in these disputes, by the opposition which had been raised by Anastasius his friend, and a presbyter of his church, to the Apollinarian phraseology. The sentiments of Nestorius and Anastasius were, however, so contrary to the blind and superstitious veneration, which the devotees of this century were disposed to pay to the Virgin, that they excited a fervent opposition among the monks of Constantinople; though the monks of Egypt were convinced by the discourses of Nestorius, and agreed with him, that the person of Christ consisted of two distinct natures, the divine and the human, and that Mary was the mother of the latter only. The imperious Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, highly incensed at the free assertion of these opinions, engaged Celestine, the bishop of Rome, in his interest; and, in 430, assembled a council at Alexandria, in which the opinions of Nestorius were condemned, and no less than twelve anathemas issued against him. Nestorius, in his turn, excommunicated Cyril; and charged him with abetting the Apollinarian heresy, and with confounding the two natures of Christ.

This dispute, which greatly agitated the Christian society, occasioned the convening of the third general council at Ephesus, in 431, in which Cyril had the indecency to preside, though a party concerned; and Nestorius, in the absence of se-

veral bishops who had a right to seats in the council, was condemned *unheard*, confined in a monastery, and afterwards banished to Oasis, a solitary place in the deserts of Egypt, where, old and infirm, he soon terminated a life of suffering and persecution. The prelates, in whose absence Cyril had proceeded to the condemnation of Nestorius, with their leader, John bishop of Antioch, being arrived at Ephesus, immediately convoked a synod, in which they excommunicated the imperious bishop of Alexandria and the bishop of Ephesus, and anathematized all who refused to reject the anathemas of Cyril. The dispute between John and Cyril continued, during three years, with equal rancour and fury ; but was at length terminated by the interference of the emperor, who persuaded John to conform to the decrees of the Ephesian council.

The opinions of Nestorius were not extinguished with his life. They were zealously maintained by Barsumas, bishop of Nisibis, by whom they were chiefly propagated throughout the east, where Nestorianism still continues to be the prevailing doctrine among the professors of Christianity\*.

Among

\* It has been supposed, that, before the close of the seventh century, Nestorianism was introduced into China. In 1625, a stone was said to be found at Sigan, the capital of Schensi, a province in the north-eastern part of China, containing Chinese inscriptions upon it, but Syriac letters round the edge, which  
mentioned,



Among other causes which contributed to this effect, was the reception of these opinions in the celebrated school of Edeffa, where the professors not only translated, from the Greek into the Syriac, the writings of the Nestorian authors, but instructed carefully their youth in all their tenets. The Nestorians in Persia, by their influence, procured the expulsion of the Greek Christians, and obtained possession of the see of Seleucia, which indeed is still retained by the patriarch of that sect.

In conjunction with their opinions respecting the Virgin Mary, the Nestorians contended, that “the union of Christ’s divinity with his humanity is not an union of nature or of person, but only of will and affection; and that Christ was to be distinguished from God, who resided in him as in a temple.”

By those who possess a knowledge of human mentioned, in express terms, that the Syrian Nestorians had, in the year 636, sent Olopaan to China, to preach the gospel there; that the emperor *Tai-sum-ven* had approved of this step, and had issued an edict commanding it to be preached all over China. This stone, which exhibits several remarkable circumstances of the state of Christianity, at different periods, was erected by *Kumdan*, who styles himself a choir bishop of Nankin, the capital of the eastern empire. The authenticity of this remarkable monument has been greatly questioned by the learned, but has been confirmed by Ruyfbroeck, a Brabantine friar, who was sent as ambassador to the Mogul, by Lewis IX. of France.—Hist. of Voyages and Discoveries in the North Seas, by John Reinhold Foster, chap. iii. p. 108.

nature, the real causes of deep and continued dissension will rarely be sought, and much seldomer be found, in the avowed object of dispute. In defiance of the contentious spirit of the times, Nestorius might perhaps, in consideration of the zeal he had manifested against other heretics, have been indulged in his opinions, had not the differences, between him and Cyril, been inflamed by the reciprocal jealousies entertained by the bishops of the principal sees, and by the implacable temper of the Alexandrian bishop: mutual revilings, mutual accusations of riot and sedition, and mutual charges of bribery, in order to obtain a favourable decision, were exhibited by the different combatants in this spiritual contention. Our compassion for the fate of Nestorius is considerably abated by a knowledge of these circumstances, and still more by his arrogant and persecuting temper; his desire of engaging the Emperor to unite with him in the extirpation of heresy, by the promise of both temporal and spiritual rewards; his persecution of the Arians, Novatians, and other sects; and his being forward on every occasion to promote the enacting of laws against heresy. His followers suffered from the prosecution of those councils which he had dictated. Theodosius enacted, that the Nestorian ecclesiastics should be expelled from their churches, and, if laics, that they should be excommunicated; and it was enjoined every Catholic to inform against them.

Euty-

Eutyches, an abbot of a convent of monks at Constantinople, was extremely active in opposing the doctrines of Nestorius, and in procuring his condemnation. Zeal, however, against his antagonist transported him into expressions which were thought to be an heresy of an opposite nature. Eutyches asserted, that there was but *one nature* in Christ, which was the *divine*; and, though Cyril had thus expressed himself, and appealed, for his justification in it, to the authority of Athanasius, *that* happened to be heresy in a monk, which was allowable in a bishop; and Eutyches was accused of denying the existence of the human nature of Christ. In a council held at Constantinople, 448, he was excommunicated and deposed, but acquitted in another held at Ephesus, in the following year, which was conducted by Dioscorus, the successor of Cyril, and in which the animosities of the contending parties were carried to such a length, that one of the accusers of Eutyches was publicly scourged, and banished to a city of Lydia, where he soon after died in consequence of the bruises he had received.

The accusers of Eutyches were not, however, disposed to submit to the decision of this tumultuous assembly; and, in concert with Leo, bishop of Rome, obtained an order for the fourth general council, which assembled at Chalcedon, in 451. In this assembly, the opinions of Eutyches were finally condemned, and the Catholic doctrine as-  
serted,

ferted, of two distinct natures in one person united in Christ, without any change, mixture, or confusion. The doctrines of Eutyches were, however, almost generally received in the patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria, though not so universally but that continued causes of uneasiness have occurred between the partisans of the different opinions, respecting the nature of Christ. The unhappy contest, which had arisen in consequence of the Eutychian and Nestorian disputes, induced the emperor Zeno to publish, in 482, a decree of union called the *Henoticon*, which was intended to reconcile the contending parties. But this decree, instead of producing the end for which it was designed, though it was subscribed by the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, and by the more moderate and judicious of all parties, and approved by Acacius bishop of Constantinople, yet gave great offence to the zealous and contentious, by not particularly specifying, amongst the councils to whose decrees it referred, that of Chalcedon, the mention of which was suppressed by the emperor, in consequence of his understanding that the present opposition arose, not from a dislike to the acts of the council, so much as to the council itself. A new division took place concerning the emperor's *Henoticon*; and the wounded dignity of the council of Chalcedon was vindicated with a rancour and fury, which it was the express intention of the edict to suppress.

The

The Monophysites, who are generally esteemed a sect of the Eutychians, equally condemned the decisions of the council of Chalcedon, and the opinions of Eutyches, that the *human nature* of Christ was absorbed by the *divine*; and asserted, that the divinity and humanity of Christ were so united as to constitute only one nature without any change or confusion. The leaders of this were Mongus bishop of Alexandria, and Peter bishop of Antioch, who obtained the name of Fullo, from having carried on the business of a fuller in his monastic state. This man, who had usurped the see of Antioch, who was troublesome and contentious, and a warm opposer of the council of Chalcedon, was himself accused of endeavouring to introduce a new sect, whose distinguishing tenet was, *that the Godhead had suffered in and with Christ*. His followers were, from this peculiar opinion, styled Theopaschites.

The other party, which was supported by Mongus, being deprived of their leader by his submission, were, on this account, distinguished by the appellation of the Acephali, or headless. This sect afterwards branched out into three others, which were denominated Anthropomorphites, Barfanaphites, and Efsaianites, who differed from each other only on account of some unintelligible subtleties, which are now deservedly consigned to oblivion.



## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
FIFTH CENTURY.

*Cyril—Theophilus bishop of Alexandria—Isidore—Theodorus  
 Arnobius—Antiochus bishop of Ptolemais—Asterius of Amasia—  
 Peter of Ravenna—Gaudentius of Brescia—Severian of  
 Gabala—Leo the Great—Gregentius—Evagrius—Basil—  
 Philostorgius—Philip Sedetes—Evodius—Orosius—Sya-  
 grius—Gennadius—Voconius—Eucherius—Prosper—Dia-  
 doculos—Nilus—Maximus of Turin—Cassian—Palladius  
 —Prosper bishop of Nola—Sidonius Apollinaris—Salvian  
 —Spurious Productions—Socrates—Sozomen—Theodoret—  
 Publication of the Talmud.*

**I**T is not amidst the gloomy shades of the fifth century, that we must expect to discern the glorious light of science. Knowledge of every kind became obscured by monastic folly, and the incursions of the barbarians, who regarded no learning as necessary, which did not increase their abilities for conquest or defence. The sun of science was not however entirely set, but shone with a faint and declining lustre. Philosophy was still professed and pretended to be taught in the great schools of the empire ; but it was no longer that solid rational knowledge which strengthens and improves the mind, but a composition of absurdity,

furdity, of subtle and complex sophistry, and of nice and fanciful distinctions.

The three most eminent writers who illumined the fourth century, Chrysostom, Jerom, and Augustin, continued their labours in this, and were the principal opposers of the different heresies which from time to time arose; they are not however exempted from the charge of having substituted logical subtilty in the room of plain sense, and issued the decrees of men for the commandments of God.

Amongst the earliest writers of this century, we find Cyril, who, in the year 412, by the assistance of a military force, obtained the bishopric of Alexandria. A commencement so tumultuous did not indicate a season of great tranquillity to the church over which he presided; and these presages were confirmed by the virulence with which he deprived the Novatians of their church, and their bishop of his property. This tyrannical spirit soon exerted itself in the assumption of new authority. The Christians of Alexandria, perfidiously drawn from their own houses in the night by an account that the principal church was on fire, were insulted by the Jews, and several of them were slain. In order to avenge this atrocious offence, Cyril took upon himself the office of the civil magistrate, plundered the Jews in return, both innocent and guilty, and exterminated them from the city.

Orestes,

Orestes, the governor, incensed at this interference, resolved to depress the assuming prelate, who, however, assisted by a body of five hundred monks\*, repelled his attacks, assaulted him in his progress through the streets, affected to worship, as a martyr, a seditious monk, who, upon this occasion, had been put to death by the governor, and was supposed to have been privy to the murder of the learned and accomplished Hypatia. This celebrated female, the daughter of Theon the mathematician, was initiated in her father's studies; her judicious comments elucidated the works of the most famous geometricians; and crowds of pupils resorted to her schools in Athens and Alexandria, to be instructed in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. This female philosopher was accused or suspected of favouring the cause of Orestes, and preventing a reconciliation between him and Cyril. She became, consequently, obnoxious to the fury of the savage band of Nitrian monks, and was rudely torn from her chariot, and murdered with every circumstance of aggravated cruelty. The black accusation, that Cyril was not unconcerned in this infamous transaction, has by some writers been controverted; but as no ecclesiastical censure was passed upon it by the bishop, who was always sufficiently ready to fulminate the ecclesiastical thunder; and as the murderers of Hypatia were headed by one Peter †, a reader in

\* Socrates, viii. 14.

† Id. ibid. 15.

the Alexandrian church, there is too much reason for the belief, that, if Cyril was not the immediate instigator of this dreadful action, the death of an opponent, however effected, was not disagreeable to him.

The literary abilities of Cyril were far from excellent. Strongly attached to mysticism and allegory, he was a subtle and crafty disputant, but neither elegant, judicious, nor profound. His works (of which his books against Julian are the principal) are comprised in six folio volumes. His zeal against heterodoxy has atoned, with many, not only for his imperfections as a writer, but for his faults as a man ; and, notwithstanding his rancour, his ambition, and his accomplishing the ruin of Nestorius, by such lavish bribery as impoverished the Alexandrian church, his zeal and superstition have effected his exaltation into the calendar of the saints.

Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, and celebrated for his opposition to Origenism and to Chrysostom, has been accused of every mean and perfidious artifice which disgraces and vilifies human nature. He appears, indeed, to have been one of the numberless scourges which continually afflicted the Alexandrian church. The resentment of this prelate against some Nitrian monks, by whom he had been, in several instances, offended, induced him to command their immediate surrender of all the writings of Origen, to which they  
were

were strongly attached. The common fate of absurd requisitions is contempt and disobedience; and the monks refused to comply. In consequence of this, the arrogant prelate obtained, in the council of Alexandria, the condemnation of all the followers of Origen; and an armed force was dispatched to disperse the monks of Nitria, who fled from their deserts, and dispatched three of their body to plead their cause before the Emperor at Constantinople, where they were favourably received by Chrysostom, who, however disposed to the doctrines of Origen, might also not be averse to protect those who were persecuted by his ancient and implacable enemy. The proceedings of Theophilus against these monks, who were distinguished by the appellation of the *three tall brothers*, were declared calumnious, by commissioners appointed by the Emperor to investigate the dispute. The resentment of the bishop against the Byzantine patriarch knew no bounds; it was uniformly exerted throughout the life of the unfortunate prelate, and even manifested after his death, when his name, through the influence of Theophilus, was erased from the sacred diptychs, to which place it was not restored till after the decease of the Alexandrian prelate, and the lapse of several years. Few of the writings of Theophilus are now extant. Whilst he governed the see of Alexandria, he ordained Synesius, a Platonic philosopher, and a disciple and panegyrist of the accomplished Hypatia,



to the biſhopric of Ptolemais. The ſage, however, appears to have been ſo far from ſoliciting this honour, that he pleaded, againſt its acceptance, his being married to an amiable wife, whom he would neither repudiate nor viſit clandeſtinely, and his Platonic opinions. Theſe objections were, however, over-ruled by Theophilus; and the reluctant Syneſius proved, both by his practice and his writings, a conſiderable ornament to the church.

Iſidore, a prieſt of Peluſium, or Damietta, an Egyptian city, was, both by his manners and his writings, a ſevere cenſor of the corrupt manners of the eccleſiaſtics of the fifth century; and openly condemned the conduct of Cyril and Theophilus. His works conſiſt of a conſiderable number of epiſtles, which abound in piety and erudition, and are compoſed upon ſelect paſſages of Scripture, the doctrines of the church, and the monaſtic ſtate.

One of the moſt learned prelates of this century was Theodorus biſhop of Mopſueſtia, who has added to the character of a valuable writer, that of an excellent man. After his deceaſe, his memory and his works were condemned, on the charge of having imbibed the Pelagian and Neſtorian opinions. His commentaries on ſcripture, which were peculiarly judicious, are ſaid to be ſtill in the hands of the Neſtorians, by whom they are greatly eſteemed: the remainder of his works are either loſt, or ſuppoſed to be extant only in the Syriac language, and in the hands of the Neſtorians.

The number of learned men who employed their abilities in the interpretation of the sacred scriptures, was not so considerable as in the preceding centuries, though several still undertook the task of explaining particular parts and books of the Old and New Testament. Arnobius composed a very indifferent exposition of the Psalms; Pelagius wrote a commentary on St. Paul; Cyril, and Victor of Antioch, also composed some commentaries upon scripture; and Gelasius bishop of Rome earnestly endeavoured to distinguish the canonical from the apocryphal books.

Of the greater part of the writers of the fifth century, little more can be necessary than to mention their names and works. Several sermons were published by Antiochus bishop of Ptolemais, Asterius of Amasia, Peter of Ravenna, Guadentius of Brescia, and Severian of Gabala, whose eloquence is said to have excited the jealousy of Chrysostom. Leo the great, bishop of Rome, employed his abilities in efforts for the extension of his see, and in persecuting the Manichean, Pelagian, Nestorian, and Eutychian heretics: several of his letters and sermons still remain.—Amongst the controversial writers we discover the names of Gregentius, Evagrius, and Basil, who defended Christianity against the Jews. The Pagans were attacked by Philostorgius, Philip Sedetes, Evodius, Evagrius, and Orosius, a Spanish priest, who, at the request of Augustin, selected a catalogue of the most remarkable

markable events, from the time of Jesus Christ, to prove that the calamities which afflicted the Roman empire, could not, as the Pagans supposed, result from their neglect of the worship of the gods.

The principal opposers of heresy, besides those already enumerated, were, Syagrius, Gennadius, and Voconius. Lessons of morality were inculcated by Eucherius bishop of Lyons, Prosper, Diadoculos, and Evagrius, few of whose fragments have reached posterity; and by Nilus, the disciple of Chrysostom, who, after having been governor of Constantinople, renounced the world, and retired to the wilderness of Sinai. Several homilies of Basil bishop of Seleucia, and of Maximus bishop of Turin, still remain. Cassian composed several books of instruction for the monastic state, and some other performances; and Palladius composed lives of the monks, which he has styled *Historia Lausiacæ*. Prosper bishop of Nola, and Sidonius bishop of Clermont, wrote several poems; and the learned, the charitable, but self-austere Salvian published four books on alms, addressed to the catholic church, and a treatise upon providence. A multitude of other authors of inferior celebrity may be seen in the catalogue of Gennadius, a priest of Marseilles, who has collected a very considerable number of the names of those ecclesiastical authors who either were his predecessors or contemporaries. Many

spurious productions made their appearance during the fifth century, which were pretended to be the productions of the ancient fathers of the church, and were exhibited to combat the doctrines which were to be overturned, or to support such as were to be established. Amongst these, were the works which bear the name of Dionysius the Arcopagite; they were first quoted in the conference between the Severians and the Catholics, which was held at Constantinople in the year 533.

The three great contemporary ecclesiastical historians, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, flourished in this century; to whom may be added, Philostorgius, who composed a history of the church. The first of these authors received his education at Constantinople, and, after some time spent in study, professed the law, and pleaded at the bar, whence he obtained the appellation of Scholasticus, a name generally given to advocates. His history is written with accuracy and judgment, though deficient in elegance, and with much plainness and simplicity of style\*. As he entertained favourable opinions of the Novatians, he has been accused of having adopted their opinions, but without reason†. It is probable, that as he was prudent and moderate, and a friend to civil and

\* The learned reader will easily perceive the obligations which the compiler of this history is under to the excellent and accurate Socrates.

† Valefius, *Vit. Socratis.*



religious liberty, these liberal sentiments, in an uncharitable age, were the only grounds for the accusation of heterodoxy.

Hermias Sozomenus, who likewise flourished in the reign of the younger Theodosius, was also educated for the law; his extreme credulity, respecting miracles, excites the disgust of his readers, though his style is much superior to that of Socrates. From the great similarity between their respective performances, there is some reason to believe, that the one must have copied the other: it so, as the history of Socrates was first composed, Sozomen must have been the transcriber\*.

The history of Theodore appears to have been written posterior to these, and, in several instances, it has supplied their deficiencies. The talents and learning of this bishop appear to have been considerable, but his impartiality was not sufficient for an historian. The writings of Theodore were not confined to ecclesiastical history; he wrote several discourses and commentaries upon scripture, in which he abridged Chrysostom. He was dedicated, by his parents, to the service of the church, even before his birth, and with the same view passed his youth in a monastery. In opposition to his own wishes, he was afterwards ordained bishop of Cyre, and in this situation he boasted (and if true, in such an age, he might be permitted to boast) that neither he nor any of his clergy had

\* Valesius, Vit. Soz.



ever been at law, or had ever, by their conduct, deserved a prosecution; and that he himself had not only dispensed the ecclesiastical revenues, in improving the city, but had dispensed his patrimony to the necessities of the poor\*. His opinions, relative to Cyril and the Nestorian controversy, were so obnoxious to the prevailing party, that, in that dispute, the emperor threatened to depose him from his see. This menace was not, however, executed; and during the time when he had the utmost reason to expect it, the fears of the amiable bishop must have been considerably soothed, by the apprehensions for his safety, and the attachment which was manifested towards him, by the people of his diocese. In the fifth general council, in the year 553, his writings concerning Nestorianism were vehemently condemned.

The close of this century, or the beginning of the next, was remarkable, by the publication of the Talmud†. This celebrated piece of Jewish literature, containing, as the Rabbins pretend, the oral laws which God delivered to Moses, consists of two parts, each of which is divided into several books. The first part, *Mishna*, contains the text; the second is a kind of commentary upon that text, which is styled *Gemara*. This oral law or tradition of the Jews was collected after the destruction of the temple, in the year 150, by rabbi

\* Theodor. Ep. 31, et Ep. 113, ad Leon.

† Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, iii. 606.

Judah, and is preferred by that people even to the scriptures. They suppose it was orally delivered by Moses to Israel, and unlawful to be written. When Jerusalem, however, was destroyed, they were constrained to write, in order to preserve it; but wrote it in such a way, that it could be understood by none but themselves. The Mishna and Gemara complete the two Talmuds; the first, that of Jerusalem, in 230; the second, that of Babylon, five hundred years after Christ. The Talmuds, however intended, confirm in reality the history of Jesus Christ. The existence and actions of a person of that name are recorded in that of Babylon; and many texts, relative to the Messiah, are confirmed and explained by these books\*.

\* Many parts of the Talmud have been translated and rendered intelligible. The Mishna-Terah of Maimonides contains the substance of the Mishna and Gemara, and may be understood with great ease. See also *Clavis Talmudica*, Cock's *Excerpta*, and the works of Ludovicus Compeigne du Veil.

## THE SIXTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Evil Effects of the Decisions in the Council of Chalcedon—Emperor Anastasius—Intrigues of the Monks—Two of them appointed to the Sees of Antioch and Constantinople—Tumults in Constantinople—Vitellianus marches to attack Constantinople—Deceived by Anastasius—Emperor Justin—Eutychians depressed—Justinian—Theodora—Riots between the Factions—Condemnation of Origen—of Theodore, Theodoret, Ibas, &c.—Opposition of the Roman Pontiff Vigilius—General Council at Constantinople—Vigilius banished—Retracts and is recalled—Disputes whether one of the Trinity had suffered—Whether the Body of Christ was corruptible or not—Justin II. favours the Eutychians—Bishops of Rome claim universal Supremacy—Contests for the Succession to that See—Rivalship between the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople—Mutual Persecutions between the Arians and Orthodox—Change of Religion in Barbarians—Title of most Catholic King—England—Saxons converted by Augustin—Archbishopric of Canterbury founded—Spirit of the British Clergy.*

THE decisions of the council of Chalcedon, in the preceding century, had, as was before stated, increased instead of extinguished the fierce

fierce flames of ecclesiastical discord. Their effects, during the greater part of the sixth century, were not less destructive to the peace of the Christian world. Anastasius, the successor of Zeno, was a firm and strenuous supporter of the Henoticon\*, published by his predecessor; and the crime of being an Eutychian was generally laid to his charge. The successive patriarchs of Constantinople, who, from professing themselves the steady opponents, had become the zealous advocates, of the Chalcedonian decrees, were, by the intrigues of an Egyptian monk, and the authority of the emperor, punished for their temerity by the deprivation of their sees. The imperial interference was, however, less favourable to the tranquillity of the empire than to the ambition of the insidious monk Severus, who obtained the episcopal throne of Antioch, while that of Constantinople was filled by Timothy, another of the same fraternity. The innovations which the Constantinopolitan prelate attempted to introduce into public worship were extremely obnoxious to his turbulent subjects. They rose, furiously assaulted the Eutychian party, which was favoured by their bishop, and a tumult ensued between the orthodox and heretical factions, in which several lives were sacrificed. The inferior

\* The decree of union or reconciliation, from *ενω* (to unite). The favourers of this decree were styled *Acephali* and *Hæsitantes*. Though written Henoticon in common, yet the H should be dropped, as *ενω* has no aspirate. H.

clergy and people of Antioch were involved in similar disturbances. Many anathemas against the Chalcedonian decrees were fulminated by the patriarch of Antioch; but his decisions were rejected and despised by several of the bishops within his own jurisdiction, who warmly refused to acknowledge the heterodox Severus as their lawful superior. These disturbances were augmented by the influence of Vitellianus, one of the emperor's generals, who avowedly patronized the cause of orthodoxy (and of Macedonius the deposed prelate of Constantinople), and approached the imperial city, at the head of an army, which, though hastily levied, was formidable from its numbers, and its chief. Vitellianus loudly threatened the deposition of the heretical emperor, if he dared to reject his propositions, which consisted in his consenting to the restoration of the banished bishops, and the convention of a fifth œcumenical council, again to consider the articles of faith. Anastasius at first refused to accede to the proposed terms; but, little prepared to oppose so formidable a body, after having seen himself deprived of the government of Mæsia and Thrace by his antagonist, he was compelled to promise a full compliance with his demands. But the faith of princes and politicians is almost proverbially insecure. The emperor had, by his artful assurances, induced his honest but less politic rival to disband and dismiss his turbulent army, and to retire to his government in Thrace; but no  
sooner



sooner had he obtained the accomplishment of these preliminary conditions, than, in defiance of all the rules of equity and honour, of candour and humanity, he protected the Monophysite party, and treated his catholic subjects with additional rancour and violence.

The death of Anastasius proved the dawn of a brighter day to the catholic party. Justin, his successor, whose valour and address had exalted him from the humble station of a shepherd's boy to the possession of a throne, was little qualified to enter into the subtleties of theological and metaphysical disquisitions, since, in fact, he could neither write nor read, and his character, previous to his being invested with the purple, naturally leads us to believe that his acuteness and penetration had been directed rather to the improvement of the soldier than the divine. The cause of the council of Chalcedon was, however, immediately and vigorously espoused by the orthodox emperor, who insisted on the strict performance of all its decrees. Severus was deposed and exiled, the catholic bishops obtained the restoration of their sees, and the sect of the Eutychians was persecuted and depressed. The zeal of the emperor in the cause of orthodoxy was still further manifested: the Arians appeared extremely obnoxious to him; and, by a public edict, he commanded them to be deprived of their churches throughout the whole extent of his dominions.

The

The decrees of synods and councils, and the deprivation of dignities, are insufficient at once to eradicate prejudices deeply rooted in the mind, and nourished to maturity by careful culture, and the invigorating sunshine of royal favour. The zeal of Justin, and the cares of Justinian, his associate and successor, were steadily but ineffectually employed in the extirpation of heresy. On the decease of Justin, his nephew was gratefully regarded by the catholic party as the firm supporter of their cause. The retrospect of his religious sentiments afforded them the most glowing hopes of his future favour, and the certain establishment of what they regarded as religious truth. The first actions of his reign tended to realize these hopes. Speculations concerning the divine nature, and theological discussions, were indeed the principal employment of Justinian; and the result was an absurd and cruel attempt to compel all his subjects to a perfect conformity of opinion with himself in all matters of religion, for which purpose, severe edicts were issued against his heretical and infidel subjects. But religious factions invaded his palace, his bed, and his throne. His empress, Theodora, was an equally zealous and a more inflexible friend to the Eutychian party, than her husband to the Chalcedonians: and the subjects of the eastern empire, ranged under the banners of those great theological combatants, were alternately reviled and depressed. Nor was theirs a war merely of words; riots and tumults were continually

continually excited by the contending parties; and the same factious spirit, which had manifested its influence in the commencement of the century, in the seditions of the Circus, concerning the \* blue and

\* As the whole history of the universe can scarcely furnish a parallel of human folly, the following account of these factions, from an ingenious modern historian, will probably not be unacceptable to the reader. "A material difference may be observed in the games of antiquity: the most eminent of the Greeks were actors, the Romans were merely spectators. The Olympic stadium was open to wealth, merit, and ambition: and if the candidates could depend on their personal skill and activity, they might pursue the footsteps of Diomedes and Menelaus, and conduct their own horses in the rapid career. Ten, twenty, forty chariots were allowed to start at the same instant; a crown of leaves was the reward of the victor; and his fame, with that of his family and country, was chanted in lyric strains more durable than monuments of brass and marble. But a senator, or even a citizen, conscious of his dignity, would have blushed to expose his person or his horses in the Circus of Rome. The games were exhibited at the expence of the republic, the magistrates, or the emperors: but the reins were abandoned to servile hands; and if the profits of a favourite charioteer sometimes exceeded those of an advocate, they must be considered as the effects of popular extravagance, and the high wages of a disgraceful profession. The race, in its first institution, was a simple contest of two chariots, whose drivers were distinguished by white and red liveries; two additional colours, a light green, and a cerulean blue, were afterwards introduced; and, as the races were repeated twenty-five times, one hundred chariots contributed in the same day to the pomp of the Circus. The four factions soon acquired a legal establishment, and a mysterious origin, and their fanciful colours were derived from the various appearances of nature in the four seasons of the year; the red dog-

and green factions, in which innumerable lives were sacrificed, was now employed in directing anathemas

dog-star of summer, the snows of winter, the deep shades of autumn, and the cheerful verdure of the spring. Another interpretation preferred the elements to the seasons, and the struggle of the green and blue was supposed to represent the conflict of the earth and sea. Their respective victories announced either a plentiful harvest or a prosperous navigation; and the hostility of the husbandmen and mariners was somewhat less absurd than the blind ardour of the Roman people, who devoted their lives and fortunes to the colour which they had espoused. Such folly was disdained and indulged by the wisest princes; but the names of Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, Verus, Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, were enrolled in the blue or green factions of the Circus: they frequented their stables, applauded their favourites, chastised their antagonists, and deserved the esteem of the populace, by the natural or affected imitation of their manners. The bloody and tumultuous contest continued to disturb the public festivity, till the last age of the spectacles of Rome; and Theodoric, from a motive of justice or affection, interposed his authority to protect the greens against the violence of a consul and a patrician, who were passionately addicted to the blue faction of the Circus.

“Constantinople adopted the follies, though not the virtues, of ancient Rome; and the same factions which had agitated the Circus, raged with redoubled fury in the Hippodrome. Under the reign of Anastasius, this popular frenzy was inflamed by religious zeal; and the greens, who had treacherously concealed stones and daggers under baskets of fruit, massacred, at a solemn festival, three thousand of their blue adversaries. From the capital, this pestilence was diffused into the provinces and cities of the East, and the sportive distinction of two colours produced two strong and irreconcilable factions, which shook the foundations of a feeble government. The popular dissensions, founded



anathemas against all who differed from whatever was considered to be the true faith, or in pursuing the inextricable labyrinth of theological disquisition.

The mysticism and obscurity of Origen was so congenial to the taste and spirit of the times, and particularly to the eastern monks, that all the decrees of councils, and all the anathemas of the clergy, were ineffectual in obstructing its progress. The private disgust of an individual procured from the emperor a public disapprobation of these opinions. Pelagius, the Romish nuncio, envious of the distinction shewn by the emperor to Theodore, the bishop of Cæsarea, an Eutychian, and a strenuous defender of Origenism, incited by his persua-

on the most serious interest, or holy pretence, have scarcely equalled the obstinacy of this wanton discord, which invaded the peace of families, divided friends and brothers, and tempted the female sex, though seldom seen in the Circus, to espouse the inclinations of their lovers, or to contradict the wishes of their husbands. Every law, either human or divine, was trampled under foot; and as long as the party was successful, its deluded followers appeared careless of private distress or public calamity. The licence, without the freedom of democracy, was revived at Antioch and Constantinople, and the support of a faction became necessary to every candidate for civil or ecclesiastical honours. A dreadful sedition between the factions, in the reign of Justinian, in which thirty thousand persons lost their lives, restored apparent quiet to the city for a few years, but the enmity of the parties was not entirely extinguished during his whole reign."

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. iv. p. 59, &c.

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sions and artifices the zealous Justinian to condemn the doctrines of Origen, and to command them to be entirely suppressed. This decision was approved by the patriarch of Constantinople and the other bishops; and Theodore received, in this indirect but certain mode, a severe blow, which was soon after followed by a determination of the emperor to condemn the sect of the Acephali, which was favoured by the bishop of Cæsarea. This design was however counteracted by the artifices of the empress, and by Theodore himself, who had been consulted on the most effectual methods which could be taken for their extirpation. The avowed opponent of the decrees of Chalcedon, in order to favour his own party, and to distress his adversaries, had the address to persuade the emperor that rescinding those passages in the edicts of the fourth general council, which had declared the orthodoxy of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyre, and Ibas of Edeffa, and condemning their writings, which were peculiarly obnoxious to the Eutychians, would completely remove the objections of the Acephali, and unite them in entire communion with the Catholic Church. The censure of three persons of doubtful reputation was so small a consideration for the important acquisition of a number of orthodox believers, that Justinian readily consented to publish an edict in condemnation of these writings, which was celebrated by the  
name

name of the *Three Chapters*\*. This was followed by the convention of a council at Constantinople, in which the sentence of the Three Chapters was confirmed. In the acts of this council, the utmost pains were employed by the members to preserve inviolate the dignity of the council of Chalcedon, by the denunciation of an anathema against all who contemned, or refused to acknowledge, its authority. But the propagation of edicts, which so evidently censured the decrees of the Chalcedonian council, was little correspondent to this apparent zeal; and the opprobrium thrown upon that assembly, and upon the memory of wise and respectable men who had died in communion with the Church, was warmly opposed by the western bishops, and by Vigilius, the pontiff of Rome. The contentious prelate soon afterwards visited Constantinople, where, either by the persuasive influence of royal entreaties, or the force of a temporary conviction, he was prevailed upon to acquiesce in the edict, and joined in the condemnation of the Three Chapters. His assent to these measures was however soon withdrawn. The refractory bishops of Africa immediately separated from his communion, and affected to consider him

\* These were, 1. the books of Theodore, who lived 150 years before, and was said to have led the way to the Nestorian heresy; 2. those of Theodoret against Cyril; and 3. an epistle of Ibas to Maris the Persian, in which the orthodoxy of the council of Ephesus was attacked. H.

as an apostate from the faith. Wearied with this opposition, Vigilius retracted his censure of these celebrated works, and once more professed his firm adherence to the decisions of Chalcedon.

Destitute of its real importance, as this controversy certainly was, it produced an uninterrupted succession of commotions and cabals. Justinian enforced his former decree by the promulgation of a new edict; and highly resented the wavering and contumacious conduct of Vigilius, who retired into the church of St. Peter, to screen himself from the effects of the emperor's resentment. Sacred as were the rights of sanctuary, such was the indignation of Justinian, that the pontiff would have been immediately torn from his asylum, had not the populace tumultuously interfered, and by their means the bishop escaped. Mutual recrimination and mutual resentment continued, during a considerable period, to exasperate the minds of the emperor and the refractory bishop. Tired with these repeated oppositions in a concern which he had so much at heart, Justinian convoked, in the year 553, a general council at Constantinople; at which Vigilius, though earnestly importuned by a deputation from the assembly, of three patriarchs, and a number of the most respectable bishops, refused to attend. During the deliberations of this assembly, Vigilius, in his letters to the emperor, severely censured their condemnation of Theodore, Theodore, and Ibas;

Ibas; and arrogantly attempted by his apostolical authority to prevent any decision contrary to his own. This had however no effect upon the council, in which the versatility of the Roman bishop was exposed; the decrees of the four preceding general councils were fully acknowledged; and to those who had been already condemned in these conventions, were not only added the names and writings of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas, but anathemas were pronounced against all who should approve their errors. These decisions were warmly opposed by Vigilius, who by his obstinate resistance provoked the emperor to send him into banishment. His retreat from the busy world, which either afforded his passions an opportunity to subside, or else the operation of his natural versatility, produced another dereliction of the opinions to which he had so obstinately adhered; and again he publicly condemned the Three Chapters. His death soon succeeded his recall.

The religious speculations of the emperor were not confined to this troublesome controversy. He took an active part in that which was agitated concerning the question, whether it could with propriety be said that one of the Trinity had suffered. The affirmative was asserted by the monks of Scythia, and favoured by Justinian, but was opposed by the monks of Constantinople. The bishop of Rome, at the request of the emperor, published a decree in favour of the Scythian monks,



and asserted the propriety of saying that one of the Trinity had suffered; since Jesus Christ, one of the persons in the glorious Trinity, had suffered in the flesh. The opinions of the emperor were not however uniformly consonant to the faith of councils, and the decrees of the fathers; and his catholicism in the evening of his life was obscured by a dark cloud. The tendency to religious disputation, so prevalent in all the subjects of the empire, was considerably increased by the approbation and example of the emperor; and numberless were the unprofitable and unimportant controversies which were continually discussed. Amongst these, a dispute had arisen, whether the body of Christ, during his residence upon earth, was corruptible or incorruptible\*. The zealous emperor, who had so strenuously laboured for the orthodoxy of his subjects, and the extirpation of the Pagans, Arians, with every other species of heretics; whether from the natural imbecillity of age, the versatility of the human mind, the persuasions of the empress†, or the collected force

\* Those who maintained the corruptibility were called Phthartolatæ and Corrupticolæ: their opponents, from whose position of the incorruptibility it was inferred that the suffering of Christ was but a phantasm, or in appearance only (*φαντασμός*), Phantasiastæ and Aphthartodocitæ. H.

† The persuasions of a beautiful woman may perhaps have some weight, even with the most intrepid theologian; nor was Justinian insensible to female beauty. But the attractions of  
Theodora



force of all these motives, professed himself a disciple of the incorruptibles, in the year 545. Thus, by publishing an edict declaratory of his belief, he at length enrolled his name amongst the Heresiarchs. These disputes, which were sustained by the controversial spirit of the emperor, continued to flame out with greater or less violence during his reign; but, after his decease, gradually declined, and were soon extinguished.

The Eutychian party acquired a steady and zealous protector in Justin II. the nephew and successor of Justinian. From the discouragements and persecutions they had met with from former emperors, their numbers had, however, considerably declined; and their sect appeared to be rapidly expiring.

The claims to supremacy, which had for preceding centuries been asserted by the bishops of Rome, were at first faintly urged, and promoted by artful and almost imperceptible means. They now however insisted upon superiority, as a divine right attached to their see, which had been founded by St. Peter; and this doctrine, which had appeared to influence the conduct of some of the Romish bishops of the preceding century, was no

Theodora were not confined to her personal charms. When, in a popular tumult against the life of the emperor, he would have abandoned the city, and endeavoured to escape; with an intrepidity unusual to her sex, she persuaded the emperor rather to resign his life than his empire; and exclaimed, "that a kingdom was a glorious sepulchre."

longer concealed, or cautiously promulgated, by those who possessed the see during the present period. But, however extensive their authority, the bishops of the ancient capital still remained, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, subject first to the jurisdiction of the Gothic kings, and, upon the retaking of Rome, to the Greek emperors; who, in imitation of their barbarian predecessors, claimed additional rights. Such however was the extensive influence of the papal intrigues, that there were few amongst the potentates of the western empire, who were not, before the close of the succeeding century, subjected to the authority of the bishops of Rome.

A station so elevated, which lay open to the ambition of such numbers, who from the disadvantages of birth, fortune, and even talents, could never have obtained any of the honourable offices of civil life, was eagerly contested for, and frequently obtained, by fraud, chicanery, and the practice of whatever was the most opposite to the conduct of a genuine believer in the gospel of Christ. During the progress of the sixth century, the peace of the Romish church was thrice invaded by the contests of rival pontiffs. Symmachus, a deacon of Rome, and Laurentius, who, upon the death of the bishop Anastasius, had, by different parties, been elevated to the vacant see, continued for several years to assert their discordant pretensions. After repeated struggles, and the claim of a prior

8 right,

right, the party of Symmachus at length prevailed. They were materially assisted by the pen and abilities of Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, who descended to employ the most abject flattery in the behalf of Symmachus, whom he addressed not with the common adulatory terms appropriated to royalty, but in those which approached to divinity; asserting that he was *judge in the place of God, and vicerent of the Most High*. The church was again divided by the reciprocal claims of Boniface and Dioscorus: the premature death of the latter terminated, however, this clerical war.—But the century did not close without another similar disturbance in this unhappy church. The intrigues of Vigilius procured a secret order from the empress Theodora to Belisarius, who was then at Rome, for the deposition of the reigning bishop Silverus, and the investiture of Vigilius in all the rights of the deposed prelate. The unhappy Silverus was, in consequence of this command, deprived of his dignities, and banished; but, upon the interference of Justinian, he returned to Italy, with the delusive expectation of regaining his rights. The good fortune however, or the superior artifices of Vigilius once more prevailed; his antagonist was resigned to his power; and was confined by him in the islands of Pontus and Pandataria, where in penury and affliction he terminated his wretched existence. Whether the testimonials which were produced to clear Pelagius, the suc-

cessor of Vigilius, from the crime of having been accessory to the death of this insolent, versatile, and ambitious prelate, were sufficient to prove his innocence to mankind, cannot easily be now ascertained. His judges however were satisfied; and posterity will perhaps not disapprove the appearance of that retributive justice, which seems to have punished Vigilius by the operation of the very same passions which had produced the misery and death of his predecessor.

The advantages attendant upon the acquisition of such enormous power were alloyed by jealousies and apprehensions. The bishops of the Byzantine see, scarcely less arrogant and ambitious than their brethren of Rome, refused to acknowledge their pre-eminence, and laid claim to similar authority. The arrogant pretensions of these rival sees involved them in continual dissensions; which were prodigiously increased by the conduct of John, the Faster, a prelate distinguished for his austerity; who, in a council held at Constantinople in the year 588, assumed the title of *æcumenical* or *universal bishop*; which had been conferred by Leo and Justinian upon the patriarch of Constantinople, though unaccompanied by any accessions of power\*. This appellation, which implied a

\* Whatever claims might be asserted by those who originally assumed this title, the present patriarchs of Constantinople cannot boast a very extensive jurisdiction, though they retain it under all the rigours of the Turkish government.

pre-eminence difficult to be endured, was opposed by Pelagius the Second, who was then bishop of Rome; and earnestly contested by his successor Gregory the Great, who asserted in lofty terms the rights of the Romish see to an entire supremacy over the whole Christian world.

The barbarian conquerors of the western parts of the empire had, as was before observed, in general adopted the heretical opinions of Arius; and they continued, with few exceptions, to be for some time hostile to the Catholic faith. Thrasimund, king of the Vandals, more accomplished, but less tolerant, than many of his contemporary monarchs, offered the most liberal incentives to apostasy; and deprived the African Catholics of their churches, which he commanded to be shut up; and two hundred and twenty bishops to be banished to Sardinia\*, where they languished in exile during fifteen years. Their restoration to peace and freedom, under his successor Hilderic, proved only a prelude to that state of authority and consequence, which they obtained from the conquest of Africa by the victorious Belisarius, the great and successful general, but latterly the unfortunate victim, of Justinian. The resumption of their pristine rights was not accompanied with the mild virtues of the primitive Christian. Still smarting from the severities they had recently experienced, they resolved to inflict equal punish-

\* Ruinart, p. 570, 571.



ments upon their persecutors ; and the Arians were in their turn exposed to the sufferings they had inflicted upon the Catholics.

The decline of Arianism, in every part of the western empire, was accelerated by hasty steps. Clovis laboured to establish Christianity wherever he carried his victorious arms ; and the Gauls, before the close of the sixth century, submitted to the government and to the religion of the Franks. By the natural vicissitudes of humour to which all monarchical government must be exposed, the inhabitants of Italy were placed alternately under the dominion of an orthodox or an heretical monarch. Narfes, the eunuch, the general of Justinian, and the rival of Belisarius, reduced the country under subjection to the empire ; from which, the whole, except the cities of Rome and Ravenna, was again dismembered, and governed by a succession of petty kings. The professors of the gospel, in Italy, groaned for several years under the dominion of their Pagan conquerors, by whom they were cruelly oppressed ; but at length Christianity, according to the faith of Arius, was received and professed by Autharis, the third monarch of the Lombards. The faith of this ferocious people becoming gradually more refined and improved, Theodalinda, the relict of Autharis, was induced to profess the Nicene doctrines ; and the Lombards gradually assumed, with their greater purity of faith, the more gentle virtues of Christians.

The

The Visigoths of Spain continued their adherence to Arianism till the year 586; when, convinced by the powerful arguments, or influenced by the authority and example, of their monarch Recared, they abjured these errors, and entered within the pale of the Catholic Church. Recared was honoured, on his conversion to the orthodox faith, with the title of the *Most Catholic King*. This monarch pleaded to his Arian clergy the testimony of earth and heaven, in support of the orthodox cause. The earth had so far submitted to profess the Catholic creed, that few of the Christian nations, except the Visigoths, continued to reject its truths; and the testimony of heaven was apparent from the miracles continually performed by the clergy of the Catholic Church. These arguments were supported by the example of the Suevi, their neighbours, who were settled in Galicia, and who had previously rejected the Arian, and adopted the Catholic creed.

Whatever regards a country, which early prejudices and deeply-rooted attachments have accustomed us strongly to revere, is peculiarly interesting and important to the human mind. England, which during this century was vanquished by the Saxons, at first experienced from her Pagan conquerors a severe persecution. Towards the close of this century, however, Bertha, the believing wife of Ethelbert, one of the most considerable of the Anglo-Saxon princes, excited in her husband

a fa-

a favourable opinion of her own religious faith, which was greatly increased by the arrival of Augustin, the monk, who travelled on a holy mission into Britain, in the year 596. This monk, aided by the labours of his forty companions, whom Gregory the Great had associated with him in this mission, had the happiness to complete, in Ethelbert, the conversion which Bertha had begun. He preached, he persuaded, he threatened; and his labours were so successful, that Christianity reared her triumphant fabric upon the ruins of Paganism. Heathen temples were converted into Christian churches; Christ-Church was formed into a cathedral; and this monk, whom Gregory had invested with full spiritual power over all the British and Saxon clergy, assumed the title of archbishop of Canterbury. Upon his arrival in Britain, Augustin found the Christians of Britain attached to the tradition of the eastern Churches respecting the time of celebrating Easter, and differing also from the practices of the Church of Rome, in the performance of some baptismal rites. This variation was warmly and haughtily condemned by the arrogant monk; but he found not in the British clergy a mean and dastardly submission to his imperious decrees. They refused even to acknowledge him as their archbishop, and would not be prevailed upon to exchange their ancient ceremonies. During six hundred years the Britannic Church never acknowledged any subjection to the power of the Romish prelates;

prelates; and, for several ages after the mission of Augustin, were so far from conforming to the practices of that Church, respecting the paschal controversy, that they observed Easter on a different day \*. The arrogance of Augustin extended to a still greater length; he attempted to invade the rights of the British metropolitans, who boldly resisted this usurper. A charge of a still more important nature has been exhibited against this unworthy apostle, who is strongly suspected of having excited the Saxons, the fierce and oppressive enemies of the people whose country they had subdued, to fall upon the Britons, and to massacre twelve hundred monks † of Bangor ‡.

The professed converts to Christianity during this century were extremely numerous. Many of the Saracens, under the command of Almundar, asserted their belief of the doctrines of the gospel, which were preached, with present but not very permanent success, to the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Euxine and Caspian seas. Christianity, after many struggles with Judaism, was also established in Abyssinia. Conversions however,

\* Bingham, book ix. c. 1.

† Rapin, vol. i. p. 79.

‡ At a period long previous to this, a monastery had been erected at Bangor, which became so considerable, that the members belonging to it being divided into seven parts, each division had a rector, and no less than three hundred persons, who subsisted by the labour of their own hands. Monachism is believed to have been introduced into Britain, by Pelagius, at the beginning of the fifth century. Bingham, b. vii. c. 1.

which were effected by such men as Augustin, were likely to produce few of the genuine effects of Christianity. It is indeed a painful consideration, that, amongst the numbers who professed a belief in the truths of the gospel during this century, this effect was generally produced from motives rather of policy than religion. In these, little more was necessary than a verbal profession of faith in Christ, and the performance of certain prescribed rites and ceremonial observances. The Church became daily less respectable, and was compared, even by Gregory the Great, to a decayed ship in imminent danger of being wrecked.



## CHAP. II.

## OF GOVERNMENT, DOCTRINE, RITES, AND CEREMONIES, IN THE SIXTH CENTURY.

*Evils of popular Elections of the Clergy—Bishop of Rome appointed by the Gothic Princes—Different Modes of appointing to Clerical Offices in different Countries—In France—In Spain—Increase of Superstition—Donations to Monasteries, &c. to obtain the Intercession of the Saints—Riches of the Church of Rome—Purgatory—Pictures and Images venerated—Increasing Respect for the Virgin Mary—Celibacy of the Clergy much insisted on—Absurdities concerning Marriage—Spiritual Kindred—Flagellation inflicted in certain Female Convents—St. Benedict and his Order—Pillar Monks—Simeon Stylites, jun.—Introduced into the West—Convents afford a Refuge for Literature—Conformity of Liturgies to those of the Metropolitan Churches—Roman Missal composed by Gregory the Great—Increased Veneration for the Sacramental Elements—Holy Water—Tonsure of Priests—Controversy concerning the Form of the Tonsure—Incredible Absurdities respecting Relics—Festival of the Purification.*

THE form of church government, which had been established during the two preceding centuries, received, in this, little or no alteration. By the laws of Justinian, the inferior ranks of the people were totally excluded from any share in the appointment of their ministers, the choice of whom

was

was restricted to the optimates, or superior orders, and to the clergy \*. The power, indeed, originally exercised by the people, appears never to have so universally obtained, that on certain occasions it could not be restrained, or varied, according to different situations and circumstances †. Whilst it continued to be exercised, it was frequently so grossly abused, and produced such disturbances in the Church, as to afford a very reasonable pretext for withdrawing it. The evils of a popular election were, as was formerly stated, prevented at Rome, after Italy was subjugated by the Gothic princes, who themselves appointed the bishop. In the different kingdoms of the western empire, different modes were adopted for adjusting the appointments to clerical offices. A custom prevailed in France for the monarch to dispose of ecclesiastical appointments by sale ‡. In Spain a new regulation for this effect was passed in the council of Barcelona, in the year 599, which ordained, that, when a bishopric was vacant, two or three candidates should be chosen, and elected by the consent of the clergy and people, who should formally present them to the metropolitan and his assistant bishops. This assembly, having previously fasted, was to cast lots for the candidates, leaving the determination to Christ the Lord §. These regulations were far

\* Justin. Novel. cxxiii. c. 1.

† Bingham, Ecc. Antiq. b. iv. c. 2.

‡ Fleury, 354.

§ Bingham, b. iv. c. i.

from being favourable to the interests of literature, or even of virtue. The Gothic princes appeared indeed desirous to nominate the worthiest candidate to the pontificate; but they were indifferent judges of learning, and not very likely to esteem in others those qualities which they did not possess themselves, and of which they could scarcely conceive the necessity. The sale of benefices was still more pernicious; and the method of choosing a spiritual guide by lot, even if fairly conducted, was replete with absurdity.

More firmly rooted each succeeding year, the noxious plants of superstition continued to throw out a number of strong and vigorous branches, which were carefully encouraged and cultivated. They were indeed an unfailing source of profit to the corrupt ministers of the Church. The people were instructed, that, by their liberality to the clergy or to the monastery, they conciliated the favour of heaven, and obtained the intercession of departed saints. Some of the churches were possessed of very considerable estates; but that of Rome, according to Theodorus Lector, in the year 520, chose not to keep any immoveable possessions; and, if it was presented with such, immediately sold them, and the purchase money was divided into three parts, one of which was appropriated to the use of the Church, the second to the bishop, and the third, in appointed portions, to the inferior clergy. Where the revenues were

thus divided, the power of the bishop must have been very considerable. Several councils indeed appointed persons to be associated with him in the distribution of ecclesiastical property; but even then the share which was allotted for the exigencies of the Church, would be distributed chiefly by his direction, and in such a manner as to extend his influence, if it was not appropriated to the indulgence of a baser passion. The property which had been gradually acquiring by the clergy, had been considerably augmented by the laws of Constantine (which encouraged bequests to the Church), and by an allowance from the public revenue. Constantine also instituted the Church successor to all martyrs or persecuted persons, who died without heirs. Upon the demolition of the heathen temples, the buildings, statues, and revenues were sometimes presented to the clergy; and Honorius enacted, that the property belonging to all heretics and conventicles should be appropriated to the same use \*. The revenues of the Church continued to receive fresh augmentations from the zeal of Justinian, who confiscated to its use the estates and property of all the clergy, or monks, who forsook the church or monastery to lead a secular life.

The corrupted doctrines of religion received, if no improvement, no very considerable alterations, in the sixth century. The torments of an intermediate state were indeed loudly insisted upon to the

\* An admirable expedient for promoting unanimity. H.

ignorant multitude, at this time, by the superstitious Gregory, whom the Romish Church has chosen to distinguish by the appellation of Great. This prelate is supposed, by some, to have laid the foundation of the modern doctrine of purgatory, which supposes a punishment to take place immediately after death, and previous to the station assigned as the eternal residence of the soul: but his opinions differed very little from those of Augustin, who preceded him near a century; and Gregory must be regarded as the promoter, not the institutor, of the doctrine. Various have been the opinions respecting the seat of purgatory. Volcanos, or the ocean, the torments of conflicting elements, or the violent convulsions of hope and fear, have, by the profound explorers of divine truth, been at different times assigned to the departed soul of man; and the ministers, who inflict punishment, have by some been believed to be angels, and by others demons. The wonderful efficacy of pictures and relics was loudly insisted upon; and the utmost reverence inculcated for the Virgin Mary, around whose head new honours were perpetually gathering. In the reign of Justinian, it became common to join the Virgin Mary, and the archangels Michael and Gabriel, in solemn oaths. The esteem for celibacy so much increased, that, though the Arian clergy of the western parts of the empire were in general married, the Latin bishops of the Catholic Church extended in some places the ob-



ligation of celibacy to sub-deacons. These regulations made it necessary to renew or enforce with vigour those laws which prohibited the clergy from entertaining in their houses any female, who came not within the degrees of near consanguinity. From imposing restraints upon the marriages of the clergy, some marriages, which had hitherto been regarded as lawful, were discouraged and interdicted amongst the laity. In the reign of Justinian, in certain degrees of spiritual relationship, persons were prohibited from contracting marriages with each other, particularly in that between a god-father and god-daughter, which was supposed to unite their souls in a divine manner, and to induce a paternal affection. Succeeding councils advanced upon these doctrines; and the canon law extended the relationship to the baptizer and baptized, the catechist and catechumen, and ingeniously discovered several degrees of spiritual kindred.

The primitive doctrines of the gospel were so entirely obscured by superstition, and so imperfectly understood, that great numbers began to conceive that the profession of religion was all that was necessary for acceptance with God. Provided they were enrolled amongst the sacred numbers who sought to procure heaven by the neglect of their duties on earth, or believed they performed a full expiation for the most atrocious offences by the infliction of voluntary personal punishment, or the institution of novel rites, or added pomp, in the  
worship

worship of the monastery, they conceived their salvation most certainly attained. Early in this century, Sigismund, king of Burgundy, who, at the instigation of his mother, had cruelly murdered his own son, attempted to appease the vengeance of the Supreme Being, by liberal donations to the monastery of St. Maurice, in Vallais (which he had founded in honour of the celebrated but fabulous Theban Legion), by the institution of a full chorus of perpetual psalmody, and by an assiduous practice of the most austere devotions of the monks. Several new orders were instituted, and exact rules prescribed for their conduct. Cæsarius, bishop of Arles, founded, in the year 507, a monastery for women, and distinguished himself amongst the number of those who composed regulations for the monastic life. In these, the offending nun, who was insensible to the milder punishments of reprimands, or a separation from the social and religious exercises of the society, was condemned to the severe discipline of flagellation, in which, however, the punishment was mercifully confined to forty stripes, save one.

Benedict, the founder of an order which through successive ages is still distinguished by his name, was a monk of Sublaquam, in the diocese of Tyber, where he erected in the adjacent wilderness twelve monasteries, each containing twelve monks; one of which, from a variety of causes, increased so much in splendour and reputation, as to be not only exempted from episcopal power, but to hold

fourteen villages under its peculiar jurisdiction. The rules prescribed by this monk, for the regulation of his disciples, were milder with respect to discipline, and more reasonable in their tendency, than those of any of his predecessors; and his order acquired a degree of reputation so favourable to its increase, that it nearly absorbed all the other monastic institutions of the western empire. Some of them indeed were distinguished by the different appellations of Cisterians, Grandimontenses, and several others; but twenty-three monastic orders have been traced to this source. From the newly-peopled wilderness of Sublaquam, Benedict departed to Mount Cassin, where he employed his time in the arrangement and perfecting of his rules, and where he died about the year 545.

To expatiate upon the extravagances and absurdities practised by the different orders of monks, either in the gloomy cloisters of their convents, or in their dreary retreats in the deserts; or to recount the artifices practised by them in their commerce with the world, would afford a detail little edifying or agreeable. Pillar-monkery continued to seduce its votaries, not only in the east, where Simeon Stylites, junior, in imitation of his fanatical predecessor, lived sixty-eight years upon different pillars; but it extended to the west, which in general appears to have been more distinguished by the knavery than the fanaticism of its monastic disciples. Vulfilaic, however, a monk of Lombardy, ascended a pillar at Treves, where he piously endured the

inclemencies of the winter ; and with apparent reluctance obeyed the commands of the bishops, who represented to him, that the cold climate of Germany was not calculated for these devotional exertions. A number of the austere penitents, whose madness had probably occasioned their feverities, and whose fanaticism in return heightened their mental imbecillity, obtained a safe retreat from the world, in an hospital, established in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, for the reception of those monks, who, in rashly attempting to pursue the lives of hermits, had sustained a deprivation of reason, which they had afterwards recovered\*.

Degraded by superstition and ignorance, as the cloistered retreats certainly were, they however became almost the only refuge, to which learning and philosophy could retire from the tumults of war and the desolations of barbarism. The founders of many orders had extorted from their followers a solemn obligation to employ a certain portion of their time in the daily study of those treatises of celestial wisdom, which were deposited in the rich mines of ancient theology. An accumulation of absurdity would, in an ignorant age, be necessarily admitted at the same time : but this obligation occasioned the reception of a fund of genuine knowledge into these gloomy repositories ; and perhaps prevented the very faculty of interchanging our

\* The loss, says Dr. Jortin, is not to be questioned ; the recovery is more questionable.



ideas by writing, or of increasing our stores of knowledge by the perusal of books, from being once more sunk in oblivion.

That a zeal for discipline was not totally extinguished amongst all the members of the Christian Church, appears from the frequency of particular councils for its enforcement during this century. The various abuses they endeavoured to rectify, and the restraints they attempted to impose, would, if no other monument existed, convince us that there were few crimes, of which a minister of religion might not be supposed to be guilty. The arrogance and profligacy of the clergy has been already remarked; their hospitality may in some degree be conceived by a canon of the council of Maccon, in the year 585, which enacts, that bishops shall not keep mastiffs to worry beggars. Towards the close of the preceding, or the commencement of the sixth century, the bishops, who had hitherto exercised the power of forming their own liturgies, agreed to conform to that of the metropolitan church. The national liturgies, in the western empire, commenced upon its being divided into different kingdoms. In these liturgies different creeds were used, varying in expression, though agreeing in doctrine, previous to the formation of the Nicene Creed. Creeds were not for a considerable time, introduced into the daily worship of the church. In the year 515, Timothy, the successor of Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople,



tinople, to demonstrate his detestation of his predecessor, whom he considered as an enemy to the Nicene faith, commanded the Nicene creed to be repeated every time divine service was performed in the church. Previous to this time, it had only been recited on Maundy-Thursday, when the bishop catechized those who were to be baptised at Easter; and was repeated at Antioch whenever the sacrament was administered. Gregory the Great composed the Roman mass, or missal, distinguished by his name, which at first was intended for the particular use of the Romish church, but was afterwards enlarged, improved, and admitted into other churches. Superstitious practices had crept even into the performance of the common devotions of the church: and it was ordered by Vigilius, that those who celebrated mass should always direct their faces towards the east.

The rite of baptism does not appear to have been administered with any variations from the forms of the preceding century; but material alterations in the celebration of the Lord's Supper took place during the pontificate of Gregory the Great, who introduced a number of ceremonies into almost every part of religious worship. Frequency of communion, from the superstitious opinions which prevailed respecting this rite, had abated by degrees: it appeared, indeed, in some places, in danger of being wholly laid aside. In a council at Arles, in the year 506, the laity were com-

commanded to communicate three times annually, on the three great festivals of Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas. A reverence for the sacramental elements was strongly insisted upon by the clergy ; and as it was customary to consecrate a larger portion, than was immediately necessary for the communicants, in order that it might be in readiness to be distributed to the sick, it was, in the year 567, enacted in the council at Tours, that it should no longer be deposited in a chest, but upon the altar, to excite the devotion of the people. The holy water, or a mixture of salt and water, which was made use of for sprinkling those who entered into or departed from the church, is first mentioned in an edict of Vigilius, in the year 538, but was probably introduced anterior to that period\*. The tonsure of the priests, amongst other ceremonial observances, was very generally enforced in this century, and became indeed an essential part of the ordination of the clergy. This practice occasioned in the church nearly as violent disputes, as those concerning the celebration of Easter. The question agitated was, whether the hair of the priests and monks should be shaven on the fore-part of the

\* This custom is evidently derived from the lustral water of the pagans, and was condemned, as impious and detestable, by the early fathers. Julian, with a view of perplexing the Christians, ordered this lustral water to be sprinkled upon the meat in the public markets, in order to compel them either to eat what they regarded as polluted, or to suffer from the rejection.

head, from ear to ear, in the form of a semicircle ; or on the top of the head, in the form of a circle, as an emblem of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus Christ. The sects usually shaved according to the former, and the Romish missionaries conformably to the latter practice ; but the time when the custom was introduced is unknown. The early fathers of the church had endeavoured, by their exhortations, to prevent the extremes of cutting the hair like the priests of Isis and Serapis, and that of wearing long hair in imitation of the luxurious manners of the barbarian soldiery. Their followers had, however, in this, as in many other instances, no reluctance to the imitation of foreign superstition ; and that mark, which once distinguished the priests of the Egyptian deities, has since that period marked the heads of Christian prelates, and has obtained the name of the Roman tonsure.

Every superstitious practice of this period met with a steady and zealous patron in Gregory the Great, who encouraged the use of pictures and images in churches, and strongly insisted upon the efficacy of relics. Gregory refused, however, to transport any part of the body of St. Paul to Constantinople, since he asserted that this sacred relic was endued with powers so formidable, that the temerity of those who dared to approach it was punished by their being seized with terror, or perhaps visited with a frightful apparition. He graciously sent to the empress, who had preferred this

this request, a portion of the filings of St. Paul's chain, to place in the church then building at Constantinople in honour of that apostle. The ingenuity of the relic-mongers favoured them with a happy device for multiplying the virtues of relics, without a multiplication of the relics themselves. Instead of distributing the pious remains of a saint, they touched the body with a piece of cloth, called *Brandeum*, which immediately received the wonderful power of healing diseases, and even sometimes of working still more extraordinary miracles. Some impious Greeks, having dared to doubt of the efficacy of such relics, were convinced of their infidelity, by Leo, bishop of Rome, who took a pair of scissors, and cut the sacred cloth, from which drops of blood are said to have immediately gushed out.

As pomp and splendour were affected in the performance of every religious rite, the churches vied with each other in magnificence. A curious altar was presented to the church of St. Sophia, by Justinian and Theodora, composed of every material which could be procured. Gold and silver, every kind of precious stone, wood, and metals, were blended together; and the table, composed of this mass, was adorned with an inscription, in which the royal donors solemnly made an offering of it to Christ, and entreated him, that they, together with the empire, might be preserved in the orthodox faith. Many festivals were, during this century,

century, introduced into the Church, the most considerable of which was the feast of the Purification of the blessed Virgin. The Lupercalia, or feast of Pan, which was constantly celebrated by the pagans, with burning tapers, was succeeded by the Christian festival of the Purification. Like its predecessor, this feast was solemnized, with a blaze of tapers; and was called Candlemas, from the lights used on that occasion. The day of consecrating a church was also in many places observed as an anniversary festival\*.

\* The people of England were permitted, on the annual feast of the dedication, to erect booths around the church, and to entertain themselves with feasting, instead of their ancient heathen sacrifices. This custom was in all probability the origin of wakes.



## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE SIXTH  
CENTURY.

*Decay of several Sects—Jacobites—Aphthartodocitæ—Severians—Agnostæ—Theodosians—Tritheists—Philoponites, &c.—Damianists.*

NATIONAL wars for the extension of dominion, and continual attempts to enforce obedience to spiritual authority, were circumstances little favourable to the tranquillity of the Christians, during the sixth century. Fewer sects, however, arose during this, than at any preceding period; and some of those divisions, which had most successfully assailed the peace of the Christian world, were nearly terminated. Donatism breathed her expiring sighs; and the doctrines of Arius, which were so extensively embraced, were forsaken by an infinite number of those by whom they were professed, and have ever since been confined to, comparatively, a very inconsiderable number of Christians. Eutychianism, favoured by the imperial smiles, was however revived from the languor and oblivion into which it had been visibly sinking. But it owed still more to the conduct of Jacob Baradæus. By his activity and eloquence, this  
drooping

drooping sect was restored to life and vigour; its votaries were numberless; its different factions were reconciled; and its credit and authority were extended through Egypt, Abyssinia, Mesopotamia, and Armenia. The newly-revived sect assumed the name of their new chief: they are still distinguished by the appellation of Jacobites; and to this day constitute the bulk of those Christians who reside within the jurisdiction of the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria.

The doctrine concerning the incorruptibility of the body of Christ, though espoused by the emperor, was steadily opposed by the orthodox party, who bestowed upon their adversaries the names of Aphthartodocitæ, Phantasiasts, and Manicheans, from some real or fanciful resemblance to that sect. Amongst the most zealous of these defenders of the faith, was Severus, bishop of Antioch, who asserted the corruptibility of the body of Christ. The adherents of Severus were, in consequence of this opinion, styled Corrupticolæ, Phthartolatæ, and Severians. Themistius, a deacon, and one of the Severian sect, pursuing still further these frivolous speculations, asserted, that Jesus Christ, as man, might be ignorant of certain things. They, who adopted this sentiment, were distinguished by the name of Agnoëtæ, or by that of their leader. The doctrines of Themistius were opposed by the Theodosians, the followers of the degraded patriarch of Alexandria.

The Eutychian controversy produced, towards the close of this century, a new sect, called the Tritheists. This sect, which taught that the Father, Son, and Spirit, were three coequal, distinct beings, who partook of one common undivided nature, divided into the Philoponists, and Cononites, according to the names of their respective leaders, who agreed in the doctrine of the three persons in the Godhead, but differed in some opinions concerning the resurrection of the body. Peter Damian, the patriarch of Alexandria, in attacking their errors, proceeded too far on the other side, and incurred the charge of Sabellianism. The Damianists distinguished the divine essence from the three persons, and denied that each person was God, when considered abstractedly from the other two; but asserted that there was a common divinity, by the joint participation of which, each person was God. The Tritheists, together with the other sects of the Eutychians, fell into that of the Jacobites, a denomination which is common to them all; although some, from the countries they inhabit, are distinguished by the names of Coptes, and Armenians.

## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
SIXTH CENTURY.

*Decay of Learning—Controversial and Party Writers appropriate the Rewards, which ought to be the Portion only of useful Learning, and true Genius—Ruin of Platonism—succeeded by the Philosophy of Aristotle—Boethius—Philoponus—Leontius of Neapolis—Isidore of Seville—John Scythopolis—Leontius—Zachary of Mytilene—Facundus—Fulgentius—Maxentius—Eulogius—Theodore—Cassiodorus—Basil of Cilicia—Evagrius—Gregory of Tours—Gildas—Procopius—Agathias—Fortunatus—Arator—Orontius—Columbanus—Justus—Avitus—Primasius—Victor of Capua—Procopius of Gaza—Cassiodorus—Gregory the Great—Justinian—Tribonian—Code, Pandects, and Institutes of Justinian.*

**I**F, in traversing the obscure and mazy paths of superstition and ignorance, which distinguished this century, we take only a cursory view of surrounding objects, we shall probably be excused by our fellow-travellers, who will find few refreshing and cultivated shades to invite their stay, few blooming and elegant productions to arrest their attention. The dreary night of ignorance began to gloom; and the road to truth, no longer pleasant and cheerful, was pursued through dismal and inextricable labyrinths.

The interests of real learning and philosophy are so necessarily connected with truth, that, in an age when duplicity and falsehood were so generally employed in the propagation of all opinions, we cannot be surprised to observe the dominion of real science nearly destroyed. The liberal rewards and honours, which were offered by the emperors for the encouragement of learning, were counteracted by their attachment to theological disputation, which naturally contracts the faculties of the human mind. Those bounties, which should have been directed to the reward of ingenious exertions, were conferred upon the subtle disputant, and the nice investigator of absurd and unmeaning terms. Nor were the schools erected under the jurisdiction of cathedrals \* and monasteries, calculated for inculcating and disseminating knowledge, since their unskilful and illiterate teachers considered philosophy and literature, as not only unnecessary, but pernicious

The later Platonism, or that compound of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Chaldaic principles, which had been so popular amongst the pagan philosophers, received a severe blow from the exertions of Justinian against paganism, and his imposition of perpetual silence upon the Athenian schools.

\* The Latins commonly used the names of *Sedes* and *Cathedra* for the bishop's throne; whence are derived our English words See and Cathedral, which are appropriated to a church where a bishop's throne is fixed. Bingham, b. viii. c. 6.



Seven philosophical teachers of the Grecian superstition, with grief and indignation, agreed to depart from the empire, and to seek, in a foreign land, the freedom which was denied in their native country. They had heard, and they credulously believed, that the republic of Plato was realized in the despotic government of Persia; but they were soon convinced of their mistake. The monarch Chosroes concealed the most savage dispositions under the disguise of philosophy; and they were extremely scandalized by the licentious practices of an eastern nation, so different from the Christians, whose doctrines they affected to despise, but whose precepts they could not but approve. They made a precipitate retreat, but they returned not to their former reputation; their numbers had declined, and their followers disappeared. They terminated their lives in peace and obscurity; and with them ended the long list of Grecian philosophers. To this sublime and ingenious, but in many respects fanciful system, that of Aristotle soon succeeded, which was introduced into the theological disputes; and, like its precursor, served to confound and perplex the reasonings of the Christian world.

Boethius, a senator of Rome, and an admirer of that wisdom which illuminated ancient Greece, was the most distinguished person who introduced the Aristotelian philosophy into the explanation of the doctrines of Christ. The abilities of Boethius

gave celebrity to every opinion he embraced ; and few were disposed to dissent from the sentiments of the first philosopher, orator, and theologian of the sixth century. His misfortunes were not less remarkable than his literary abilities. Born to the possession of an ample fortune, and descended from one of the noblest families at Rome, Boethius prosecuted, in ease and independence, the most abstruse or the most elegant studies, and adorned all the duties of public and private life, by his strict regard to justice ; by his eloquence, which was always exerted in the cause of humanity and innocence ; and by his liberality to the distressed. Such conspicuous merit was felt and rewarded by the discerning Theodoric, who honoured this illustrious senator with the titles of Consul, and Master of the Offices ; and afterwards gratified his paternal ambition, by creating his two sons Consuls at the same time, and at an early age. “ Prosperous in his fame and fortunes, in his public honours and private alliances, in the cultivation of science, and the consciousness of virtue, Boethius might have been styled happy, if that precarious epithet could be safely applied before the last term of the life of man.

“ A philosopher, liberal of his wealth and parsimonious of his time, might be insensible to the common allurements of ambition, the thirst of gold and employment : and some credit may be due to the asseveration of Boethius, that he had  
reluctantly

reluctantly obeyed the divine Plato, who enjoins every virtuous citizen to rescue the state from the usurpation of vice and ignorance. For the integrity of his public conduct, he appeals to the memory of his country. He had always pitied, and often relieved, the distress of the provincials, whose fortunes were exhausted by public and private rapine; and Boethius alone had courage to oppose the tyranny of the barbarians, elated by conquest, excited by avarice, and, as he complains, encouraged by impunity. In these honourable contests, his spirit soared above the consideration of danger, and perhaps of prudence. The disciple of Plato might exaggerate the infirmities of nature, and the imperfections of society; and the mildest form of a Gothic kingdom, even the weight of allegiance and gratitude, must be insupportable to the free spirit of a Roman patriot. But the favour and fidelity of Boethius declined in just proportion with the public happiness; and an unworthy colleague was imposed, to divide and controul the power of the master of the offices. In the last gloomy season of Theodoric, he indignantly felt that he was a slave; but as his master had power only over his life, he stood, without arms and without fear, against the face of an angry barbarian, who had been provoked to believe that the safety of the senate was incompatible with his own. The senator Albinus was accused, and already convicted, on the pre-

sumption of *hoping*, as it was said, the liberty of Rome. “If Albinus be criminal,” exclaimed the orator, “the senate and myself are all guilty of the same crime. If we are innocent, Albinus is equally entitled to the protection of the laws.” These laws might not have punished the simple and barren wish of an unattainable blessing; but they would have shewn less indulgence to the rash confession of Boethius, that, had he known of a conspiracy, the tyrant never should. The advocate of Albinus was soon involved in the danger, and perhaps the guilt, of his client; their signature (which they denied as a forgery) was affixed to the original address, inviting the emperor to deliver Italy from the Goths; and three witnesses of honourable rank, perhaps of infamous reputation, attested the treasonable designs of the Roman patrician. Yet his innocence must be presumed, since he was deprived by Theodoric of the means of justification, and rigorously confined in the tower of Pavia; while the senate, at the distance of five hundred miles, pronounced a sentence of confiscation and death against the most illustrious of its members. At the command of the barbarians, the occult science of a philosopher was stigmatized with the names of sacrilege and magic. A devout and dutiful attachment to the senate was condemned as criminal, by the trembling voices of the senators themselves; and their ingratitude de-  
served



served the wish or prediction of Boethius, that, after him, none should be found guilty of the same offence.

“ While Boethius, oppressed with fetters, expected each moment the sentence or the stroke of death, he composed, in the tower of Pavia, the *Consolation of Philosophy*; a golden volume not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully, but which claims incomparable merit, from the barbarism of the times, and the situation of the author. The celestial guide whom he had so long invoked at Rome and at Athens, now condescended to illumine his dungeon, to revive his courage, and to pour into his wounds her salutary balm. She taught him to compare his long prosperity and his recent distress, and to conceive new hopes from the inconstancy of fortune. Reason had informed him of the precarious condition of her gifts; experience had satisfied him of their real value; he had enjoyed them without guilt; he might resign them without a sigh; and calmly disdain the impotent malice of his enemies, who had left him happiness, since they had left him virtue. From the earth, Boethius ascended to heaven, in search of the SUPREME GOOD; explored the metaphysical labyrinth of chance and destiny, of prescience and free-will, of time and eternity; and attempted to reconcile the perfect attributes of the Deity, with the apparent disorders of his moral and physical government. Such topics of conso-



lation, so obvious, so vague, or so abstruse, are ineffectual to subdue the feelings of human nature. Yet the sense of misfortune may be diverted by the labour of thought; and the sage, who could artfully combine in the same work the various riches of philosophy, poetry, and eloquence, must already have possessed the intrepid calmness which he affected to seek. Suspense, one of the worst of evils, was at length determined by the ministers of death, who executed, and perhaps exceeded, the inhuman mandate of Theodoric. A strong cord was fastened round the head of Boethius, and forcibly tightened, till his eyes almost started from their sockets; and some mercy may be discovered in the milder torture of beating him with clubs till he expired. But his genius survived, to diffuse a ray of knowledge over the darkest ages of the Latin world; the writings of the philosopher were translated by the most glorious of the English kings; and the third emperor of the name of Otho removed to a more honourable tomb the bones of a Catholic saint, who, from his Arian persecutors, had acquired the honours of martyrdom, and the same of miracles\*.”

The crimes committed by this illustrious senator against the monarch of Rome, were not confined to the treasonable wish of restoring the liberty of the people, and the power of the senate; Boethius had written in defence of the Catholic doctrine of

\* Gibbon, iv. p. 36.

the Trinity, and, in his zeal for religion, had attacked, not only the Nestorians and Eutychians, but even Arianism itself, though professed by Theodoric. A knowledge of all the arts and sciences was diffused by the indefatigable pen of Boethius. In the celebrated work *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, he has exhausted every topic of consolation which the philosophy of the Grecian schools could suggest; but has entirely omitted the firmer supports, which are afforded by Christianity under the afflictions of the present state. It has been conjectured, and probably the conjecture may be well founded, that Boethius intended to have perfected his treatise by the addition of a sixth book, on the topic of Christian consolations. As it is evidently transmitted in an imperfect state, it is not reasonable to suppose, from the omission, that Boethius was more sensible to the consolations of a philosopher than to those of a Christian, or was a firmer believer in the doctrines of stoicism, than in those of the gospel.

The various controversies which engaged the attention of the Christian world, produced a multitude of writers, more considerable indeed from their numbers than their abilities. The errors of the pagans were attacked by Philoponus, and those of the Jews by Leontius of Neapolis, and Isidore of Seville. The names of Anastasius, John Scynthopolis, Leontius, Zachary of Mytilene, Facundus, Fulgentius, Maxentius, and Eulogius, are

are distinguished amongst the controversial writers of this century. But the greater part of them, in detailing their own perplexed opinions, were little calculated to convert their readers; and must, by the substitution of rancour and vehemence in the place of argument and reason, have induced disgust rather than conviction.

Like the controversialists, the historical writers of this century are little distinguished for their excellence. A collection of the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, was compiled by Theodore, who continued the historical accounts to the reign of the elder Justin. A compilation of the same materials was made by Cassiodorus, to which he added a short chronicle. Basil of Cilicia wrote also an ecclesiastical history, which was continued by Evagrius, but greatly corrupted by fabulous accounts. The annals of France, by the famous Gregory of Tours, are written in a style utterly devoid of simplicity and elegance; and his eight books of the Lives of the Saints are replete with weakness, superstition, and credulity; nor do the inconsistent accounts in the work, *concerning the Destruction of Britain*, by our countryman Gildas, deserve a much higher character. Those historians who were the most deserving of attention were Procopius and Agathias, the former of whom accompanied Belisarius in the Italian and African wars; and acquired so considerable a share of reputation under successive emperors, that he was

honoured with the office of Quæstor, and with the important station of Præfect of Constantinople. He composed two books concerning the Persian war, two books of the Vandalic, and four of the Gothic. In these performances, wherever he has occasion to mention Justinian or Theodora, he always speaks of them in the most honourable terms; and, in his account of the *Edifices of Justinian*, extols the emperor for his devotion and liberality, his mildness and magnificence, and the empress for her piety and zeal. But the external professions of courtiers do not always accord with their real sentiments; and Procopius, if he be, as there is much reason to believe, the author of the *Secret Anecdotes*, has more than unsaid every thing he had advanced in favour of his benefactors, and has left a perpetual record of their dishonour and of his own duplicity. The historical accounts of Procopius terminated in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Justinian; but were continued by Agathias, who published his history in the year 593. Each of these writers has been charged with paganism; and, however this accusation may have been controverted in favour of the former, against the latter it remains in full force. If the charge against both be true, they are distinguished by being the two last pagan historians who have written in Greek, and of whose works there are any considerable remains. Religious poetry was, during this century, cultivated for very different purposes:

poses : for that of giving popularity to the fabulous miracles of the saints; and in the more laudable view of endeavouring to embellish the truths of the gospel. Fortunatus composed in verse the life of St. Martin; and Arator made a poetical translation of the Acts of the Apostles. Amongst the other religious poets of this century, were Oron-tius, who wrote a Warning to the Faithful; and Columbanus, the disciple of the British abbot Congal, whose ardent zeal for monachism was attended with such success, that his followers were dispersed through Ireland, Gaul, Germany, and Switzerland.

Were we to judge of the excellence of the commentators of this period, by the number of their expositions, we should form an exalted idea of their value. But they were, with few exceptions, an ill-disciplined band, little calculated for the performance of important actions. Commentaries upon Scripture were composed by Justus, who wrote upon the Song of Solomon; by Avitus, upon the Apocalypse; by Primasius, upon the Epistle to the Romans; and by Victor of Capua, who composed the Harmony of the Gospels. The most distinguished expositors of the sixth century were, Procopius of Gaza, upon the book of Isaiah; Cassiodorus, who commented upon the Psalms, the Canticles, and other parts of scripture; and Gregory the Great, who expounded the Book of Kings, and the Song of Solomon. To the merit  
of



of being a firm consubstantialist, Cassiodorus added those virtues which recommended him to the most exalted approbation of the Arian monarchs under whom he lived, who rewarded his distinguished excellence by the gift of some of the most considerable offices in their disposal. After the enjoyment of several public honours, Cassiodorus, at the advanced period of one hundred years, closed his life in a monastery, where, in tranquillity and retirement, he had long employed himself in the pursuits of literature, which were enlivened by his knowledge of philosophy and mechanics.

Gregory, whose birth, rank, advancement of the papal power, and whose literary abilities, acquired him, in this age of ignorance, the appellation of Great, was descended from an illustrious patrician family. His rank and abilities, at a very early age, procured him the office of Præfect of Rome; but he relinquished all the pleasures and all the employments of a secular life, to devote himself to retirement, in one of the monasteries which he had erected with his ample patrimony. His retreat was, however, distinguished by his reputed talents, and by the circumstances with which it was accompanied: and Gregory was soon summoned from his retirement, by his appointment as deacon of the Church, and his subsequent office of nuncio from the apostolic see to the Byzantine court. In this situation he boldly assumed, in the name of St. Peter, a tone of independent dignity, which

which would have been criminal and dangerous in the most illustrious layman. He also engaged in a dispute with the patriarch of Constantinople, whether the bodies of the just, at the general resurrection, were to be really solid, or thinner than air. He returned to Rome with increased reputation; and on the death of Pelagius II. for whose recovery he had distinguished himself by the frequency of his public intercessions, he was dragged from the cloister to the papal throne, by the unanimous voice of the clergy, the senate, and the people. He resisted, however, or appeared to resist this elevation, and secretly conveyed himself to the neighbouring woods and mountains. This retirement might perhaps afford leisure for the abatement of his dread of the pontifical dignity; or, as security naturally renders men fearless, he might become less cautious in concealing his retreat: however this may be, the abode of Gregory was discovered, as it was reported, by a celestial light; he was brought forth from his concealment, consecrated, and invested with the full possession of the Roman see. In this station, which he enjoyed more than thirteen years, his labours were invariably directed to what he conceived the benefit of religion, or to the aggrandizement of the church of Rome. His inordinate ambition he endeavoured to conceal, perhaps from himself, under a mask of the most profound humility; and condemned, in his rival, the patriarch of Constantinople,

ple, the title of Universal Bishop, which he was too haughty to concede, and too feeble to assume; and which he contrasted and opposed, by styling himself *Servus Servorum Dei*, servant of the servants of God. Superstition received, in Gregory, a potent and zealous auxiliary; his attachment to relics, to ceremonies, to the splendid variety and change of sacerdotal garments, and to the pomp of public worship, was extreme. Till the last days of his life, he officiated in the canon of the mass, which continued above three hours, and which was rendered more splendid by music, and by the introduction of solemn and pompous rites in its celebration. The liberality and moderation of the Roman bishop were very conspicuous in his behaviour towards the Jews, who resided within the limits of his jurisdiction; but his pious hatred was strongly exerted against the Christian sectaries, who dared to question the validity of the doctrines of the Church. The numerous publications of Gregory rank him amongst the most voluminous authors of the sixth century: yet he decried human learning; and, with some justice perhaps, shewed his dislike of those who must have condemned him, by committing the works of a number of classical writers to the flames, amongst which was the historian Livy. He is charged with having still further evinced his zeal against every species of pagan excellence, by the demolition of several valuable monuments of ancient magnificence;

cence; lest those, who visited Rome, might be induced to pay more attention to triumphal arches, and profane productions, than to sacred things. Gregory was a rigid disciplinarian; and loudly insisted upon the perfect celibacy of the clergy, which he took the utmost pains to ascertain. The judgment he has shewn, in some instances, in his literary performances, is debased by the most excessive credulity and weakness; and his Dialogues contain a multitude of absurd and ridiculous fables, which are dignified by the names of Miracles, and the Lives of the Saints, and confirmed by the credulity or the craft of this pious pontiff, in order to advance the credit of his religion. Posterity has paid to the memory of Gregory a return of the same tribute which he liberally granted to the virtues of his own or the preceding generations; and, after his death, those celestial honours, which at all times have been freely bestowed by the authority of the popes, were paid to Gregory the Great; who, however, is the last of that order whose name is inscribed in the Calendar of Saints.

Amongst the patrons and encouragers of literature during this century, must be enumerated the emperor Justinian, to whom several literary performances have been ascribed. At a very early period of his reign, this monarch projected a reformation of the Roman jurisprudence; and, in conjunction with nine others of the most celebrated professors of the civil law, the learned Tribonian



at length accomplished this arduous, but necessary task, which Justinian had prescribed. The new *Code* was perfected in fourteen months, and honoured by the name and signature of the emperor. A more arduous operation still remained; to extract the spirit of jurisprudence from the decisions and conjectures, the questions and disputes, of the Roman civilians. Seventeen lawyers, with Tribonian at their head, composed, from these materials the *Pandects*, which were accomplished in three years. To these were added, by the command of the emperor, and the diligence of the imperial delegates, the *Institutes*, which are divided into an elementary treatise, comprised in four books; and, like the *Code* and *Pandects*, to which they were designed as an introduction, are honoured with the name of the emperor. The *Code* made its appearance in the year 528, and the *Institutes* in 533, a month before the publication of the *Pandects*, which had however been previously compiled. In 534, the emperor published a more accurate edition of the *Code*, which he enriched with several of his own laws, and some decisions in the most intricate and difficult points of jurisprudence; and gave to this performance the title of *Novels*. In a rescript of Justinian, dated in the year 541, no mention is made of the consuls; and from this period, the custom of counting years from the consulates, which had prevailed from the time of the Roman republic, entirely



354      *Change in the Mode of Dating.* [CENT. 6,  
ceased ; and the year of the reigning emperor was  
introduced, and continued to be used : though,  
some years previous to this, Dionysius Exiguus,  
in his *Cyclus Paschalis*, had introduced the mode  
of computation now generally used in the Christian  
world, from the birth of Christ.

## THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Reigns of Justin, Tiberius, and Maurice—Phocas—Heraclius—Monothelite Controversy—Vain Attempts for reconciling Theological Differences—Constantine and Heracleon—Constans—Silence enjoined concerning Theological Speculations—Controversy continued, notwithstanding the Imperial Edict—Persecution of Pope Martin I.—Constantine Pogonatus—Sixth General Council—Condemnation of the Monothelites—Attempt to raise a dead Man, as a Proof in favour of Monothelism—Roman Pontiffs—Boniface III.—Agatho—Pope's Claim to Infallibility—Controversies in the West—Inflexible Rancour of the Jews—Conquest of Jerusalem by Chosroes—Generosity of Heraclius—Jews baptized—Persecution of the Jews in Spain—Laudable and tolerant Spirit of the Spanish Clergy—Conversion of Pagan Nations—Mahomet—His Origin—Doctrines—Flight—Assumption of Regal and Sacerdotal Power—Conquests—Causes of his Success—Destruction of the Alexandrian Library—Vices of the Clergy—Superior Clergy whip the inferior Ministers—Assume temporal Power—Confusions a*

*Rome, occasioned by the Election of a Pope—Destruction of the Patriarchates of Alexandria, &c. by the Mussulmans.*

THE reigns of Justin, Tiberius, and Maurice, the immediate successors of Justinian, were distinguished by a rare but happy chasm in the ecclesiastical affairs of the east: nor did the imperial interference occasion any alteration during the reign of the ambitious Phocas, the murderer and successor of the amiable and unfortunate Maurice. On his accession to the throne, he made a solemn promise to the Byzantine patriarch, to defend and to preserve inviolate the orthodox faith of the councils of Nice and Chalcedon; and in this solitary instance the perfidious prince was firm to his engagement: nor did he concern himself more with the doctrines than with the practice of religion. The enormities of his conduct soon deprived him of a sceptre which he so unworthily retained. Exasperated by injuries, the people of Constantinople were easily induced to forget their allegiance to a cruel and insidious prince; and Heraclius, the African Prætor, had little difficulty in obtaining possession of the imperial throne.

The orthodox zeal of the new emperor did not permit him to be an indifferent spectator of religious affairs. He engaged with warmth in the nice decisions of theology; and his ardour for religion was rewarded by the gratitude of the people  
and

and clergy, who, in his war against the Persians, recruited his exhausted treasury with a considerable sum, derived from the sale of the magnificent gold and silver vessels, which had been appropriated to the decoration or to the uses of the church\*. On his victorious return from the Persian war, Heraclius entered into the theological question, which for some years had been much agitated, concerning the existence of *two wills* in Christ. The orthodox belief consisted in his possessing the wills and operations peculiar both to his divinity and humanity. The doctrine of one will was, however, strongly insisted upon by many of the clergy, and was adopted by the emperor, who conceived that the profession of a doctrine, certainly harmless, and possibly not quite without foundation, might reconcile the Jacobites of Egypt and Syria (whose opinions it approached) to the orthodox faith. Heraclius, therefore, indulged the laudable but impracticable design of effecting ecclesiastical union. Zeal for religion might perhaps instigate him to this measure; but probably policy had some share in a design which was intended to prevent the defection of numbers, who, like the Nestorians, might secede, not only from the church, but from the empire.

Prompted by these motives, the imperial theologian, by the advice and concurrence of several of the Monophysite party, published an edict which

\* Gibbon, vol. v. p. 510.

asserted, that, after the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, there existed only one will and one operation. Athanasius, the Armenian bishop of the Monophysites, and Sergius, the Byzantine patriarch, who favoured that sect, had laboured to persuade the emperor, that this declaration would induce the Monophysite party to receive the Chalcedonian decrees ; and, provided it were assented to by the orthodox, would terminate the controversy. Cyrus, bishop of Phasis, a zealous Monothelite, or assertor of one will in Christ, was promoted by the emperor to the vacant see of Alexandria, and confirmed the favourite opinion of his benefactor by the decrees of a provincial council. This perplexed doctrine, illustrated and modified according to the opinions or ingenuity of its different adherents, was explained by them in terms which admitted of such various significations, that it was accepted by considerable numbers, who were restored to communion with the church.

But however acceptable this romantic project for the restoration of union, amongst a people who delighted in controversial disquisitions, might be to many ; still, although it was supported by the efforts of Honorius, the Roman pontiff, and of the Byzantine patriarch, it met with a violent opposition, and occasioned contests not less pernicious to the tranquillity of the church, than those which it was designed to prevent.

The emperor, and the heads of the eastern and western



western churches, were regarded as the betrayers of the orthodox faith ; and the heretical Monothelites, and the schismatical assertors of two wills, regarded each other with mutual distrust and implacable aversion. Disappointed in these endeavours for ecclesiastical harmony, Heraclius had recourse to another method, and published the *Ec̃thesis*, or Exposition of the Faith ; in which all controversies upon this subject were strictly prohibited. This exposition was the production of Sergius, bishop of Constantinople, and was approved by his successor Pyrrhus, and several of the eastern bishops. But it met at Rome with a very different reception. On the decease of Honorius, the more orthodox Severian had obtained the pontificate, who continued warmly to condemn the Monothelite doctrine, and to oppose the *Ec̃thesis* ; and it was openly condemned in a council by his successor John the Fourth, and by Theodore, who in the year 642 succeeded to the papal see.

The short and tumultuous reigns of Constantine and Heracleon admitted not of the Imperial interference in religious disputes : they still continued, however, to disturb the peace of the Christian world ; and Constans had scarcely assumed the purple, before he published the *Type*, an edict of a similar nature to that of his grandfather Heraclius, which enjoined profound silence upon this long-disputed question. This proclamation might suppress, but could not extinguish, the heated

passions of the theological disputants. Sophronius, bishop of Jerusalem, had been among the most zealous opposers of Monothelism, and had condemned this heretical opinion in a provincial council. His labours in the cause of orthodoxy ended not with the subjugation of his see by the Saracens, in the year 636; he still continued, by his writings and example, to animate the clergy and the monks. They detected a latent heresy in the language, and even in the silence, of the Greeks; they were joined by the Latin churches; the obedience of pope Honorius was retracted and censured; and the execrable heresy of the Monothelites, which was said to have revived the errors of Manes, Apollinaris, and Eutyches, was formally condemned. As the representative of the western church, pope Martin I. in his Lateran synod anathematized the perfidious and guilty silence of the Greeks. One hundred and five bishops, chiefly the inhabitants of those parts of the western empire which remained in subjection to the Saracens, presumed to reprobate his execrable *Type*, no less than the impious *Eutyches* of Heraclius. Such an insult could not pass with impunity. Martin was removed from Rome, and was afterwards exiled to Naxos, a small island in the Archipelago; and his oracle, Maximus, a seditious monk, of the same party, was banished to Bizyca.

Whatever had been the perverseness and obstinacy of this pontiff and his associate, humanity must,

must, notwithstanding, recoil at their sufferings. Martin was, after a series of expedients in order to escape punishment, taken prisoner by the exarch Calliopas, and sent to his place of banishment. His voyage, which was embittered by apprehension, captivity, disease, and insult, was succeeded by a year's imprisonment, in which he endured extraordinary hardships. Nor were his sufferings mitigated at the expiration of that period : on his return to the imperial court, he was exposed to the insults of the populace, by whom he was reviled and contemned as a rebel, and was confined in a common prison. After a captivity of more than three months, during which he was oppressed with a violent dysentery, and denied the comforts of suitable food, he was summoned before the senate ; refused the indulgence of a seat, though from disease and weakness he was unable to stand ; and was charged with treason against the state. His asseverations of innocence, and the powerful plea he exhibited of the impossibility of his committing the crime, were ineffectual. The unhappy pontiff was divested of his sacerdotal garments, loaded with chains, was ordered to be led through the city, preceded by the executioner bearing a drawn sword, and at length to be cut in pieces. Immediate death was not however inflicted upon the miserable Martin ; he was thrown into successive prisons, and sent into banishment on the inhospitable shores of the Tauric Chersonesus ; where a

famine, and the inattention of his friends, who neglected, or who perhaps feared, to administer to his relief, added extreme penury to the overflowing cup of his sufferings, and he died amidst these calamities in 656\*.

Though the spirit of discord was, by these severe proceedings, in some degree repressed, it was not overcome. The bishops of Rome successively adhering to the decrees of the Lateran council, and the example of Martin, continued in a state of separation from the Greek church. In order to unite, and if possible to restore peace to the church, the emperor Constantine Pogonatus, by the advice of Agatho, the Roman pontiff, convened at Constantinople a general council, which is called the sixth. This assembly commenced in November, 680; and, after eighteen meetings, terminated in the following September, after having confirmed the decrees of the Romish synods by the condemnation of the Monothelites, and of the deceased pontiff Honorius. The emperor presided personally in this convention, and the arguments or the persuasions of the Duothelites were of sufficient efficacy to induce the son of Constans to relinquish his infant creed, while the example, or perhaps the influence, of the royal proselyte converted the Byzantine pontiff and a majority of bishops. The Monothelites, with their chief, Macarius bishop of Antioch, were condemned to the

\* Bower's Hist. of Popes, vol. iii. p. 55.



temporal and spiritual pains of heresy. The eastern provinces condescended to accept the documents of the west; the creed which teaches that two wills, and two operations, were existent in Jesus Christ, was finally determined; and the articles of the Catholic faith irrevocably defined. During the debates of this synod, the aged and fanatical Polychronius was called upon to declare his faith; who proposed a more summary decision of the orthodox belief, than the controversies of this assembly, by offering to restore to life the body of a dead man. Many of the judges in this cause were too well acquainted with the nature of modern miracles, not to have some reason to be apprehensive of this mode of decision: they probably took care, however, that the body was actually dead; and consented to the trial. But in vain did Polychronius deposit his written confession of faith upon the body; in vain did he whisper, during several hours, into the ears of the deceased: the vital spark was totally extinguished, and the insane ecclesiastic, who, notwithstanding the failure of this proof, still persisted in the doctrine of one will and one operation in Christ, was degraded from his sacerdotal function, and piously anathematized by the clergy and people.

The state of religion in the western parts of the empire underwent few alterations during this century. Those claims to dominion and supremacy, which at first were but faintly urged by the Ro-



man pontiffs, were continually extending, and as continually successful: new titles, and even those which had occasioned the warmest opposition from the followers of St. Peter, when conferred upon their brethren of Constantinople, were eagerly sought for, and gratefully received, by the bishops of Rome for themselves. The artful Boniface III. who had for some years resided as nuncio at the imperial court, did not disdain to insinuate himself into the good opinion of the infamous Phocas, nor to receive with gratitude the effects of his favour. The Romish patriarchs were permitted in future to assume the title of Oecumenical or Universal bishops: this title, however, was unaccompanied by any new powers, and only served to increase the animosity which invariably subsisted between the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople; the latter of whom saw with extreme uneasiness the deprivation of his own dignities, and the accumulation of those which were possessed by his haughty rival. The title of Pope, which in fact merely signifies the name of Father, was equally bestowed upon the bishop of Rome and those who possessed the other considerable sees; and Cyprian had been complimented with the title of Pope of Carthage, by Cornelius bishop of Rome. About the seventh century the prelates of the Roman see began, however, to appropriate this title to themselves. But the demands of ambition and vanity are insatiable: and the leaders of the Romish church were so little

contented

contented with the honours they had already acquired, that Agatho laid claim to a privilege never yet enjoyed by man ; and asserted, that the church of Rome never had erred, nor could err in any point, and that all its constitutions ought to be as implicitly received as if they had been delivered by the divine voice of St. Peter\*. These insolent pretensions to infallibility, when they were first asserted, were resisted by many bishops of the western churches, and by several princes. The Spanish monarchs, particularly, chose not to consider the Roman pontiff even as the head of the church ; but claimed nearly the same degree of supremacy over the churches in their dominions, which the kings of England since the reign of Henry VIII. have exercised over theirs.

The rage for religious disputation, which was so general in the eastern parts of the empire, extended, though in an inferior degree, its influence to the west. The Pelagian controversy was warmly agitated both in Gaul and Britain ; and considerable numbers of the Lombards, uninfluenced by the example of the court, still continued their attachment to the doctrines of Arius. The sceptre, no longer swayed by the hands of a firm consubstantialist, was transferred to the valiant Rotharis, a zealous Arian. His regard to justice was not however, in this instance, less conspicuous than in the other transactions of his reign : he forbore to compel his Catholic subjects to the

\* History of Popery, vol. ii. p. 5.

violation of their consciences, by an external profession of his own religious creed; but in all the cities of his dominions permitted the appointment of two bishops, an Arian, and a Consubstantialist. The other barbarian princes continued in a firm adherence to the decrees of the council of Nice. They presided in the ecclesiastical councils, entered into every debate concerning faith or discipline, and their barbarian subjects were admitted to the performance of the sacred functions of religion.

The increase of Christianity was beheld by the Jews with the utmost rancour of which the human mind is susceptible; and this passion was continually augmented by the severe edicts which at various times had been promulgated against them by their Christian rulers. The wars between the Persians and the Roman emperor afforded them an opportunity for the gratification of their revenge. The conquest of Jerusalem was meditated and achieved by the zeal and avarice of Chosroes, who enlisted for this holy warfare an army of six-and-twenty thousand Jews: these saw with exultation the capture of the city; the flames bursting out from the stately churches of Helena and Constantine; the demolition of the sepulchre of Christ; and the precious relic of the cross conveyed, together with its sacred guardian, the Christian patriarch, into Persia. The massacre or captivity of ninety thousand Christians was the consequence of the conquest of Chosroes. Many of them were  
disposed

disposed of by the inhuman Persian to his Jewish adherents, and in their subjection to these masters endured evils which were poorly compensated by the gift of life. The victories of Heraclius restored them once more to the enjoyment of their rights; but his conduct towards the Jews was marked by a spirit of revenge, unworthy of a conqueror who had generously set at liberty fifty thousand Persian captives.

These unhappy people were destined to experience the severe vengeance of the exasperated monarch; they were ignominiously banished from the seat of their fondest wishes, from the Holy City; and the miserable captives were compelled to a punishment the greatest that could be conceived, that of receiving the sacred rite of baptism in the Christian church.

The unhappy situation of this people was considerably increased by the punishments which their factious and seditious conduct excited not only in the eastern but western parts of the empire. Their wealth, however, rather than their contumacy, or their attachment to the mosaical rites, might occasion many of the evils for which their religion was the avowed pretext,

Sincebut, the Gothic monarch in Spain, suddenly attacked his Jewish subjects; compelled the timid to receive the sacrament of baptism, and confiscated the effects of the obstinate. The Spanish clergy had not, however, so far forgotten the bene-

benevolent doctrines of the gospel, as to regard this circumstance with approbation, or even with indifference. They openly opposed the cruelty and folly of these severe proceedings: in their provincial council, they forbade the forcible imposition of the holy sacraments; but their superstition, and mistaken zeal for the honour of the church, permitted them not to liberate from this most cruel slavery those who had been partakers of the initiatory rite of Christianity, and who had been, though by the most unworthy means, enrolled amongst the professors of the gospel. They decreed, that those who had already been baptized should still be constrained to the external profession of the Christian religion.

The decrees of this council were probably mollified by the influence of the president, Isidore, bishop of Seville, who dared to condemn the mode of conversion prescribed by the Gothic monarch\*. The decree of the council of Toledo, in the year 633, was, however, less favourable to this persecuted people. A decree passed, that the children of the Jews should be forcibly taken away from their parents, and placed in monasteries, or in the hands of religious persons, where they might be instructed in the principles of Christianity†. Towards the close of this century, a charge was exhibited against them, which afforded a pretext for

\* Chron. Goth. p. 728.

† Fleury, Hist. Ecc. viii. p. 367.



additional severity: they were accused of treason against the state; and in the council of Toledo their possessions were confiscated; their persons condemned to perpetual slavery to the Christians, who were earnestly exhorted not to tolerate them in the exercise of their religion; and their children were doomed to be taken from them, at the age of seven years, to be educated in the Christian faith, and to be afterwards married to Christians\*.

The boundaries of Christianity were, in this century, still further expanded by the assiduity of the Nestorians in the east, and the zeal of several monks in the west. Missionaries from the monastic orders of Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, travelled into Germany, with the design of propagating or preserving the knowledge of Christianity. The Frieslanders were converted; and the Picts in England, together with the monarchs of the Saxon Heptarchy, acknowledged the truths of the gospel. But Christianity received, at an early period of this century, a most fatal blow from the doctrines and conquests of Mahomet, or Mahommed, the arch-impostor of the east. Descended from the most illustrious tribe of the Arabians, and from the most illustrious family of that tribe, Mahomet was, notwithstanding, reduced by the early death of his father to the poor inheritance of five camels and an Ethiopian maid-servant. In his 25th year he entered into the service of Cadijah, an opulent widow

\* Fleury, Hist. Ecc. ix. 125.

of Mecca, his native city. By selling her merchandise, in the countries of Syria, Egypt, and Palestine, Mahomet acquired a considerable part of that knowledge of the world which facilitated his imposture and his conquests: and at length the gratitude or affection of Cadijah restored him to the station of his ancestors, by bestowing upon him her hand and her fortune.

“According to the tradition of his companions,” says Mr. Gibbon, “Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person\*, an outward gift, which

\* The Arabian writers concur in describing the person of their prophet as of “middle stature, a large head, full beard, black eyes, aquiline nose, wide mouth, thick neck and flowing hair, with a prodigious mole between his shoulders beset with bristles.” Nor are we to conclude this an imaginary picture: for on a large seal in bronze, that used to be impressed upon the military standards of the Mahometans, and is still preserved in the Borgian collection, we have a nearly corresponding inscription, which ADLER in his *Museum Cusicum*, see p. 99, and pl. ix. thus renders: “In nomine Dei misericordis. Nihil petimus a te, nisi misericordiam pro mundo, a te, qui albescentes habes capillos, vividioris es, lacteo mixti, præditus pectore alto, superciliis distantibus, longis ciliis, ampla fronte, auribus parvis, naso gibboso, rotunda facie et barba, manibus longis, mollibus digitis, statura quadrata, sine pilis in manibus, sed pilosus a pectore ad umbilicum, et inter scapulas impressum habes sigillum prophetiæ, cui inscriptum est, Abi quo vis, et semper eris victoriosus.”

The circumstance of the mole being the seal of the Prophet's mission, could not escape the ridicule of Cervantes; as is evident from the description which the Princess Mianicône gives of the knight errant by whom, it was foretold, she should be restored to her kingdom, and which very criterion identified Don Quixote to

which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life, he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country; his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca: the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action; and, although his designs might gradually expand with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius. The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia; and the

be He.—“Dixo mas, que avia de ser alto de cuerpo, seco de rostro, y que en el lado derecho, debaxo del ombro izquierdo, ó por alli junto, avia de tener un lunar pardo, con ciertos cabellos à manera de cerdas, &c. &c.” H.

fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian; his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach; but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view; and some fancy has been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian *traveller*. He compares the nations and religions of the earth; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies; beholds, with pity and indignation, the degeneracy of the times; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest, that instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the east, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bosra and Damascus; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle; and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Cadijah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eye of genius might discern some objects invisible to his grosser companions; some seeds of knowledge might be cast  
upon

upon a fruitful soil : but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity ; and it cannot be perceived, in the life or writings of Mahomet, that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every region of that solitary world, the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled, by the calls of devotion and commerce. In the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted, or forced, to implore the rights of hospitality : and the enemies of Mahomet have named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius ; and the uniformity of a work denotes the hand of a single artist. From his earliest youth, Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation : each year, during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world, and from the arms of Cadijah : in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode was not in the heavens, but in the mind of the prophet. The faith which, under the name of *Islam*, he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an eternal truth, and a necessary fiction : THAT THERE IS



ONLY ONE GOD, AND THAT MAHOMET IS THE APOSTLE OF GOD."

The doctrines of Mahomet were artfully adapted to the prejudices of the Jews, the several heresies of the eastern church, and the pagan rites of the Arabs. To a large proportion of mankind they were rendered still more agreeable, by the full permission of all sensual gratifications, which were not only allowed to the faithful believer in this world, but his share of enjoyment, as well as his capacity for it, were promised to be increased in the groves and fountains of paradise, where seventy-two houris, of resplendent beauty, were allotted to the embraces of the sincere, though most insignificant believer.

In order to prove that Jesus Christ was the prophet, not the son of God, and endued only with powers a little superior to those of Moses, the impostor had recourse to the assertion, that all texts to the contrary were interpolations in the sacred scriptures, the validity of which, with these alterations, he fully allowed. In the retreats of Hera, Mahomet professed he had the felicity of communing with the angel Gabriel, who revealed to him those sentiments concerning the nature, the will, and the attributes of the Supreme Being, which compose the Koran. This system, which was slowly formed, and gradually promulgated, was at first probably inspired by fanaticism, and was afterwards perfected by artifice. The first proselytes of Mahomet were his faithful wife Cadijah, his servant Zeid, his pupil Ali,

Ali, and his friend Abubeker. His religion slowly advanced within the walls of his native city, Mecca, during ten years. In this situation, the Prophet was surrounded by enemies, jealous of the power of his family, and incensed at his pretensions ; and his death, which was resolved upon by the princes of Mecca, was only prevented by a nocturnal and precipitate flight to Medina ; the memorable æra of the Hegira, which happened in the 662d year of the Christian æra, and still discriminates the lunar years of the Mahometan nations.

The fame of Mahomet had preceded his flight ; and the profession of *Islam* had already been acknowledged at Medina, where the Prophet was received with the loyal and devout acclamations of five hundred of the citizens. From the time of his establishment at Medina, Mahomet assumed the exercise of the regal and sacerdotal functions, and was invested with the prerogative of forming alliances, and of waging war. He urged the command of heaven to propagate his religion by every possible means : thousands enlisted under his warlike banner, who were gratified with a distribution of the spoil, which was regulated by a divine law ; a fifth was reserved by the Prophet for pious and charitable uses, and the remainder was shared in adequate portions by the soldiers. These rewards, the eternal recompenses of paradise, and the persuasive tenets of fate and predestination, induced the companions of Mahomet to face danger, and to

meet undauntedly that death which they believed it impossible to shun.

Encouraged by the conquest of his own country, the victorious Prophet carried his arms into the Roman territories, with invincible courage and astonishing success. In the sixty-third year of his age, the happiness of his faithful disciples was embittered by the indisposition of their master, who believed himself poisoned by the revenge of a Jewish female; and, after a lingering disease, the Prophet terminated his existence in the year 632\*. Of the issue of his twelve wives, Fatima, the

\* As a part of Mr. Gibbon's character of this celebrated impostor and conqueror has been already extracted, probably the succeeding remarks of that brilliant writer may not be improper, as a conclusion of the portrait.

“ At the conclusion of the life of Mahomet, it may perhaps be expected that I should balance his faults and virtues; that I should decide whether the title of enthusiast or impostor more properly belongs to that extraordinary man. Had I been intimately conversant with the son of Abdallah, the task would still be difficult, and the success uncertain: at the distance of twelve centuries, I darkly contemplate his shade through a cloud of religious incense; and could I truly delineate the portrait of an hour, the fleeting resemblance would not equally apply to the solitary of Mount Hera, to the preacher of Mecca, and to the conqueror of Arabia.—The author of a mighty revolution appears to have been endowed with a pious and contemplative disposition: so soon as marriage had raised him above the pressure of want, he avoided the paths of ambition and avarice; and till the age of forty he lived with innocence, and would have died without a name. The  
unity

the wife of Ali, alone remained ; and the sceptre of Arabia was transferred from the family of Mahomet into the hands of Abubeker, who assumed the title of Caliph, a name which equally implies  
a spiritual

unity of God is an idea most congenial to nature and reason : and a slight conversation with the Jews and Christians would teach him to despise and detest the idolatry of Mecca. It was the duty of a man and a citizen to impart the doctrine of salvation, to rescue his country from the dominion of sin and error. The energy of a mind incessantly bent on the same object, would convert a general obligation into a particular call ; the warm suggestions of the understanding, or the fancy, would be felt as the inspirations of heaven ; the labour of thought would expire in rapture and vision ; and the inward sensation, the invisible monitor, would be described with the form and attributes of an angel of God. From enthusiasm to imposture, the step is perilous and slippery : the dæmon of Socrates affords a memorable instance, how a wise man may deceive himself, how a good man may deceive others, how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud. Charity may believe that the original motives of Mahomet were those of pure and genuine benevolence ; but a human missionary is incapable of cherishing the obstinate unbelievers who reject his claims, despise his arguments, and persecute his life ; he might forgive his personal adversaries ; he may lawfully hate the enemies of God. The stern passions of pride and revenge were kindled in the bosom of Mahomet ; and he sighed, like the prophet of Nineveh, for the destruction of the rebels whom he had condemned. The injustice of Mecca, and the choice of Medina, transformed the citizen into a prince, the humble preacher into the leader of armies ; but his sword was consecrated by the example of the saints ; and the same God who afflicts a sinful world with pestilence and earthquakes, might inspire for their conversion or chastisement the valour of his servant. In the exercise



a spiritual and a temporal command. The successors of the Prophet propagated his faith, and imitated his example; and such was the rapidity of their progress, that, in the space of a century, Persia,

exercise of political government, he was compelled to abate of the stern rigour of fanaticism, to comply in some measure with the prejudices and passions of his followers, and to employ even the vices of mankind as the instruments of their salvation. The use of fraud and perfidy, of cruelty and injustice, were often subservient to the propagation of the faith; and Mahomet commanded or approved the assassination of the Jews and idolaters who had escaped from the field of battle. By the repetition of such acts, the character of Mahomet must have been gradually stained; and the influence of such pernicious habits would be poorly compensated by the practice of the personal and social virtues which are necessary to maintain the reputation of a prophet among his sectaries and friends. Of his last years, ambition was the ruling passion; and a politician will suspect, that he secretly smiled (the victorious impostor!) at the enthusiasm of his youth, and the credulity of his profelytes. A philosopher will observe, that *their* credulity, and *his* success, would tend more strongly to fortify the assurance of his divine mission; that his interest and religion were inseparably connected; and that his conscience would be soothed by the persuasion, that he alone was absolved by the Deity from the obligation of positive and moral laws. If he retained any vestige of his native innocence, the sins of Mahomet may be allowed as an evidence of his sincerity. In the support of truth, the arts of fraud and fiction may be deemed less criminal; and he would have started at the foulness of the means, had he not been satisfied of the importance and justice of the end. Even in a conqueror or a priest, I can surmise a word or action of unaffected humanity; and the decree of Mahomet, that in the sale of captives the mothers should never be separated from their children, may suspend or moderate the censure of the historian."

In



Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, and Spain, had submitted to the victorious arms of the Arabian and Saracen conquerors.

That the Christian subjects of those countries should submit to the dominion of these barbarians, is not wonderful : they had little power to resist ; and the forces of the empire, attacked in various places, could afford little opposition to the incursions of these powerful invaders. But that their forced profession of the Mahometan faith should soon become so generally acceptable to the professed believers in a gospel of peace and purity, may excite more surprise. Let it, however, be remembered, that Christianity no longer retained the same form it had assumed in the primitive church ; the substance had been lost in pursuing the shadow. Weakened and divided by their absurd controversies, and no longer united by the virtues prescribed in the gospel, the Christians of

In his private life the apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family ; he kindled the fire, milked the ewes, and mended with his own hands his shoes and his woollen garment. On solemn occasions he feasted his companions with rustic and hospitable plenty ; but in his domestic life many weeks would elapse without a fire kindled on his hearth. It is remarkable, that blood and treason seem to have encompassed the throne of Mahomet from the very first. The prophet himself died in the full conviction that he owed his death to poison ; Omar and Othman both fell by the dagger of the assassin ; Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet, and the most virtuous of all the caliphs, after a short, turbulent, and seditious reign, expired in the same violent and insidious manner.

the seventh century became an easy prey to the victorious followers of Mahomet, whose tenets concerning the lawfulness of bloodshed, rapine, and violence, in the propagation of religion, could not be very obnoxious to the feelings of those, who had viewed, without abhorrence, the same means employed in the propagation of opinions they had themselves approved. Adapted as the doctrines of the great eastern impostor were to the jarring sectaries, the warmest contenders in Christian theology were amongst the foremost of its apostates. Unwilling to relinquish any abstruse nicety, or unreasonable scruple, for the peace of the Church, they surrendered the whole of their religion at the mandate of their barbarian conquerors; at least the whole which remained to them, the profession and appellation of Christians.

The Nestorians, and Monophysites, abhorred and detested by their orthodox brethren, were eagerly received and protected by the sagacious impostor; and repaid this service by bearing arms for the extension of his power over their oppressors.

Under the successors of Mahomet, the Christians who were averse to his faith, suffered incredible hardships; and devastation and bloodshed marked the footsteps of the professors of the faith of Islam. In the victorious progress of Amrou, a Saracen general, Egypt was the fruit of his conquests; and a circumstance which arose after the capture of Alexandria is strongly expressive of the character

of the first caliphs. Amrou had, in his leisure hours, amused and improved himself by the conversation of *John Philoponus*, a celebrated grammarian of that city, and a polite scholar. Philoponus earnestly besought his patron to gratify him with the present of the Alexandrian library; but the request of a favourite was not sufficient to make the victorious general forgetful of the obedience which was due to the caliph. The request was therefore preferred to Omar, who replied, with the spirit of a fanatic, "If these writings of the Greeks agree with the book of God, they are useless, and deserve not to be preserved; if they disagree, they are pernicious, and ought to be destroyed." The sentence was executed with blind obedience; and such was the incredible number of the volumes, that, during six months, they supplied fuel for the forty thousand baths, which contributed to the health and convenience of the populous capital of Egypt\*.

\* *Memoires de l'Académie*, xiii. 615. Mr. Gibbon affects to discredit the destruction of the Alexandrian library by Amrou; but he substitutes, on this as on many occasions, conjecture for evidence, and in fact places conjecture in opposition to good authority. Mr. Gibbon was a man of a most brilliant imagination, and possessed a considerable command of language; but if we consider his prejudices, his faulty arrangement, his illogical conclusions, his total disregard to chronology, his great and affected obscurity, and the general unsuitableness of his style to historical composition, it is impossible not to esteem his elaborate work as a very bad history.

The

The heretical opinions of those who had asserted, that Jesus Christ was possessed of only one will and one operation, proved so much more obnoxious to the members of the Church, convened at the third general council of Constantinople, than the increasing immoralities of the clergy, that the synod was dismissed, if not without any person adverting to the necessity of discipline, at least, without having enacted a solitary canon for the regulation of clerical conduct.

The enormities which were, however, committed, demanded instant regulation; and several provincial conventions attempted to remedy the disorders, which threatened the dissolution of Christianity itself. Almost every crime which disgraces humanity entered into the dark catalogue of clerical vices, which were augmented by the arrogance and cruelty of their conduct towards the inferior clergy. The council of Prague, in the year 675, passed a public censure upon those of the superior clergy, who whipped, as slaves, the inferior ministers of the Church; or who compelled their deacons to perform the menial office of carrying the bishop upon their shoulders\*. The authority exercised by the clergy extended as well to the superior as to the inferior classes of mankind; and the twelfth council of Toledo, in the year 681, presumed to release the subjects of

\* Fleury, viii. 680.

Wamba from their allegiance to their sovereign. In vain did the deposed monarch endeavour to regain his kingdom, by the plea that the habit of a monk, with which he had been invested, had been put upon him, under the pretence of his being a penitent, at a time when his disorder had rendered him insensible. But the two characters of a monk and a king were deemed incompatible by his haughty and arrogant judges. Ervige was declared to have a lawful claim to the allegiance of the people; and the unfortunate Wamba was prohibited from the exercise of temporal jurisdiction, which was not adapted to the situation of a king who was condemned to perform penance.

At a time when the manners of the ecclesiastics were so extremely corrupt, we can scarcely be surprised at any instance of atrocity. The Romish see was a prize worthy of the utmost ambition and avarice, and it was eagerly aspired after by various contenders. The intrigues of Peter and Theodore for the pontificate had scarcely ceased, by the appointment of Conon to that see, when the early death of the Romish patriarch afforded a new opportunity for contention between Theodore (who seized upon the Lateran palace) and Paschal. Each contender being elected by his own party, the magistracy and the people were obliged to interfere; in consequence of which, the election of Sergius to the unoccupied see destroyed the pretensions of the two competitors. The submission  
of



of Theodore soon followed; but his rival, the archdeacon Paschal, was with great difficulty compelled to resign his pretensions. An accusation of magic was, however, soon preferred against the turbulent priest, who was, in consequence of the charge, deposed from his station in the Church, and condemned to spend the remainder of his life in a monastery, forgotten, or remembered with abhorrence, by a credulous and superstitious people.

The patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, which had already suffered repeated defalcations of power, were during this century abolished, by the conquests of the victorious Saracens. Nominal bishops \* were indeed appointed to those sees, which had been subjected to the power of the Mussulmans: but toleration was not the virtue of the followers of Mahomet; and, however the Arabian caliphs might be disposed to favour those sects by whom their conquests had been originally advanced, the orthodox Christians were severely oppressed, and the prelates strictly prohibited from the exercise of the episcopal function in their dioceses.

\* Called Bishops *in partibus infidelium*.

## CHAP. II.

OF GOVERNMENT, DOCTRINE, RITES, AND CEREMONIES IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

*Council assembled for the Reformation of the Clergy—Clergy permitted to retain their Wives—Superstitious Observances in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper—Efficacy of Masses asserted—Pilgrimages—Divination—Privileges of Monks extended—Boniface IV. converts his House into a Monastery—Licensed to perform every Clerical Function—Alteration in Nicene Creed—Capture and Recovery of the real Cross—Festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross—Of the Annunciation—Deposition and Nativity of the blessed Virgin—Church of All Saints—Rights of Sanctuary—Public Penance.*

IN order to supply the omissions of the sixth general council, and to provide a remedy for the disorders of the clergy, another council was convened at Constantinople, by the emperor Justinian II. in the year 692. This convention obtained the name of the *Quinisext Council*, from its being considered as a supplement to the two last general conventions; and the *Council in Trulla*, from the synod being assembled in a chamber of the imperial palace, which was covered with a dome or cupola, and called *Trulla*. This council, amongst various regulations respecting discipline, was so favourable to the marriages of the clergy, as to decree that the separation of those of the clerical order,

who were already married, from their wives, was contrary to the command of Christ. It condemned the Saturday's fast, prohibited the representation of Christ under the symbol of a lamb, and raised the Byzantine patriarch to a rank equal with that of the pontiff of Rome. Several of the western churches refused to consider as valid the acts of a synod, which, while it confirmed the faith established by former councils, so strongly militated against their opinions and practices; and the Quinisext council has been branded, by the zeal of the Romish adherents, with the names of *an illegitimate council, a false synod, a convention of malignants, and a diabolical council*\*. Its canons have, however, been always acknowledged and observed by the Greek church.

The doctrines of religion underwent few alterations in this century: its superstitions were, however, generally received, and their authority confirmed by the sanction and approbation of the multitude. The different fathers of the western church vied with each other in the invention of new superstitions; and appear to have believed, that, in order to distinguish themselves as the champions of the church, it was necessary to refuse the aid of truth and reason in support of her cause. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which in the first ages of the church had been received with the utmost plainness and simplicity, was now accompa-

\* Fleury, ix. 110.

nied by various superstitious observances prescribed by the authority of councils. The council of Toledo, in the year 646, prohibited its being received after having eaten the smallest particle of food; and that of Trulla confirmed this decree, with the addition of a command to the receiver to take it stretching out his hands in the form of a cross. The superstitious opinions respecting the sacrament extended to the eucharistical wine, which, when mixed with ink, rendered the contract with which it was signed peculiarly sacred. This element, the type of that blood which was shed for the happiness of mankind, was made a vehicle for conveying the bitterest rancour and uncharitableness. When Theodore, the Roman pontiff, deposed and anathematized Pyrrhus, the Monothelite (who, to conciliate his favour, had publicly abjured his errors, but afterwards, upon finding that the protection of that pope was rather an impediment to his restoration to the Byzantine see, from which he had been deposed, retracted what he had abjured), the haughty bishop, calling for the sacred chalice, dipped his envenomed pen in the consecrated wine, and then subscribed his condemnation, which was attended with every superstitious ceremony that could fill the mind with terror and dismay.

The superstitions which increased the power and authority of the clerical order, were at the same time fruitful sources of wealth. The doctrine of

the efficacy of masses repeated by ecclesiastics was strenuously urged; and such was their supposed virtue, that they were thought capable of alleviating not only the pains, and refreshing the weariness, of the sick, but of procuring the captive a temporary release from his bonds\*. The doctrine of pilgrimage afforded a profit not less considerable: such indeed were the benefits accruing from the visits of devout pilgrims to the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul, that the Romish missionaries exerted every art of persuasion to induce their proselytes to avail themselves of a practice which so materially lessened the difficulties they must encounter in the paths to salvation. The people, the priest, and the monarch, were equally infected by the most desperate superstition. When Heraclius had ravaged the Persian dominions, he opened the book of the gospels, in order to be determined, by the first sentence which caught his eye, upon the choice of his winter quarters. Interest, however, which is a stronger principle than superstition, in the minds of most men, sometimes opposed its dictates. When, upon the return of Constantine Pogonatus from Sicily, a party of his subjects would have persuaded him to adopt his two brothers as partners in the empire, in imitation of the sacred Trinity, the emperor was not sufficiently accessible to such a reason, to agree to the request. He put to death the projectors of a scheme so absurd; and com-

\* Jortin, *Ecc. Remarks*, vol. iv. p. 432.



manded the noses of his unfortunate brothers to be taken off, which occasioned a deformity that amounted to a perpetual exclusion of the unhappy sufferers from any share in the administration of the imperial affairs.

The progress of monastic power has been traced through the preceding centuries. Arising from an obscure original, its claims and its accessions, though great, were gradual; but, though slow, were effectual. The privileges of the monastic orders were considerably extended in the council\* said to have been convened by Gregory the Great, in which the monks were permitted to elect their abbot either from their own society or that of any other monastery; and the bishops were prohibited from taking a monk from his cell, in order to introduce him into the clerical order, without the consent of his superior; and from interfering with the revenues of the monastery. Their power was completely established in the year 606, by Boniface IV. whose attachment to the monastic state was such, as to induce him to convert his house at Rome into a monastery. This prelate granted to the monks authority to preach, to baptise, to hear confession, and to absolve, and in fine to perform every clerical function. These regulations, which released the monks from their former allegiance to the bishops, occasioned, by the gratitude of that body, a considerable accession of power to

\* Concil. Rom. iii. five Lateran. Conc. v. p. 1608.

the Roman see; and, by collecting into one channel the streams which had been extensively dispersed, made the difference between the powers of the Roman pontiff and the other bishops still more excessive\*. Exclusive of the privileges granted by Boniface, the monastic orders obtained in this age several other advantages. Their influence extended over all ranks of the people. In common with the other ecclesiastics, they enjoyed the benefits arising from the various and prevalent superstitious observances; to which were added several peculiar means of emolument and power, derived from their reputation of superior merit and sanctity. The parent believed he secured the eternal salvation of his offspring, by entrusting it to the direction of these spiritual guides. The miserable victim, secluded within the gloomy walls of a convent, might perhaps not submit without repugnance to a life of austerity and mortification.

\* In return for the privileges derived by the monastic orders from the edicts of the popes, that body supported every arrogant pretension advanced by the Romish see, and were unswerving champions in whatever affected either the public or private conduct of the bishop of Rome. A child being fathered upon Sergius, the pontiff, during the seventh century, Adhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, who was then at Rome, and baptized the child, is said to have commanded it to declare whether or not it derived its being from Sergius; when the infant, though but nine days old, solemnly declared that the holy father had never had the least intercourse with the female sex, and consequently that he could not be his son.—*Life of the Abbot of Malmesbury*, by an anonymous monk of that monastery.

But habit, example, and exhortation, might conquer his dislike, and induce his submission; and the labours of his spiritual directors were repaid by an accession of power, and the less pure reward of liberal donations, which generally accompanied these sacrifices. Innumerable were the monasteries and abbeys which were founded in this century, in every part of the western empire, by the zeal not only of the male but of female devotees. Amongst these, one of the most celebrated was the order of the Beguiues, in Flanders, which was instituted by St. Beggha: they were properly a society of plebeian canoneſſes.

The ſimple expreſſions which had been deemed ſufficient, in the firſt ages of the church, for declaring the aſſent of its members to the truths of Chriſtianity, received conſiderable additions from the zealous attention of the fathers of the church, to guard againſt the admission of heretics. In the fourth council of Toledo, in the year 633, the leaders of the Spaniſh churches aſſerted their belief, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father and the Son. This opinion had been long maintained among the Greeks, and during this age was introduced into the weſt\*: but it was not till the ninth century that it was generally received in the Latin church; when the word *Filioque*, expreſſing the proceſſion of the Holy

\* Jortin, iv. 437.

Spirit from the Father and the Son, was added to the creed\*.

The capture of the cross was regarded, by the greater part of the Christians of this century, as a loss more to be deplored than any other of the depredations occasioned by the Persian arms. The recovery of this most important treasure was attended with effects adequate to its value. The emperor Heraclius conveyed it with sacred pomp to Jerusalem; and after having solemnly returned thanks to God for the victories he had achieved, and especially for being the instrument of rescuing that most venerable relic from the enemies of the Christian name, he piously deposited it in the great church. The identity of the cross thus restored was manifested by the performance of numberless miracles; and this event was the commencement of the festival of the *Exaltation of the Holy Cross*. On the approach of the Saracens, this precious deposit was again removed, and was taken to Constantinople. The reverence paid to this wonderful and never-decaying relic was extended to whatever bore a similar form, which was esteemed too sacred to be placed in the way of pollution or disrespect. The council of Trulla commanded, in

\* This creed, which has been distinguished by the appellation of the Nicene, is that which is used in the English liturgy under that title; but is in fact the confession of faith drawn up at Constantinople. Bingham, *Ecc. Antiq.* b. x. c. 4.

purfuance of this idea, that no croffes fhould be permitted to be made upon the floor.

Feftivals on various occafions were added to the Chriftian rites during this century, amongft which the Virgin Mary appears to have been particularly diftinguifhed. The feaft of her Annunciation was inftituted, in the council of Conftantinople, in the year 692 ; the remembrance of her death was commanded to be obferved, and was denominated the Depofition of the Virgin ; and the feaft of her Nativity was eftablifhed towards the clofe of this century\*. Few of the faints had indeed been forgotten in the diftribution of celeftial honours ; but Boniface IV. obtained a grant of the Pantheon at Rome ; and, in order that no one might be neglected, he piously dedicated it to all the faints. The edifice, therefore, which among the pagans had ferved as a memorial of all the gods, was confecrated by the Chriftians to the remembrance of all their faints, and a feftival to their honour was inftituted in a fucceeding century.

The rights of fanctuary, as we have already feen, were admitted at an early period into the Chriftian church ; and they were foon very liberally claimed by thofe who had violated the peace of

\* The refpect paid to the Virgin Mary appears, like all the other parts of the vaft fabric of fuperftition, to have made gradual advances to perfection. Cakes made on the vigil of the nativity, to her honour, were indeed prohibited by an ecclefiastical decree, but her reputation daily increafed.



society, and refused to submit to its laws. Imperial edicts and clerical decrees were repeatedly issued to restrain the privileges of asylum to the perpetrators of lesser crimes, whilst those who had committed grosser offences were commanded to be surrendered up to justice. Under the pontificate of Boniface V. the licentious and profligate obtained farther immunities by one of his decrees, which ordained, that, whatever the offence of the criminal, none should dare to take him forcibly from his sanctuary in the church. This political measure, while it promoted a general spirit of depravity, became a considerable accession to the power and aggrandizement of the church. It at length indeed extended almost to the annihilation of the civil authority, and demanded the exertions of the sovereigns of Europe to restrain it within decent limits\*.

The

\* Sanctuary was instituted by Moses†, on the establishment of the children of Israel in the Land of Promise, by the appointment of six cities of refuge for the reception of any person who had accidentally slain his neighbour, till he could be brought to a fair and dispassionate trial for his crime‡. These asylums being chosen among the Levitical cities, afforded some slight connection between them and religion; and the alliance was still more apparent, when the Temple of Solomon, and particularly the altar of burnt-offerings, obtained a similar privilege. Asylums were instituted also amongst the Greeks, at a very early period; and they soon became equally accessible to the crafty or violent assassin, and to the accidental man-slayer: nor were the

† Exodus, xxi. 13.

‡ Numb. xxx. 12. Deut. xix. 6. Josh. xx. 6. 9.

The observance of public penance, an institution admirably calculated for the preservation of good order in the church, had, as has been already stated, considerably declined. But the necessity and advantage of private confession and penance was earnestly inculcated by several of the fathers of the church; and particularly by Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who for some time fully

most notorious offenders (out of reverence to the Deity, who presided in the Temple) forcibly taken from this place of security. Romulus, who was interested in the population of his newly-erected and empty city, with wise policy proclaimed it an asylum where the most guilty and the most unfortunate might be certain to find refuge and protection.

When the empire became Christian, the emperors transferred the privileges and immunities of the ancient sanctuaries to Christian churches\*: they were, however, occasionally restricted by the imperial laws, and the privileges confined. After the decrees of Boniface, the privilege of protecting criminals was not generally obtained by the inferior churches, where indeed the clergy were not so well able either to protect or maintain this atrocious band, who had a right to demand from them a supply of victuals, raiment, a habitation, &c. *sine quibus corpus ali non potest*. The extent of the sanctuary differed in different places. Upon the dissolution of the monasteries in England, in 1540, sanctuary was confined to parish churches and church-yards, cathedrals, hospitals, and collegiate churches; and Henry VIII. refused to admit to this privilege any who had been guilty of high treason. It was still further limited under Edward VI. and totally abolished by James I.

See a judicious sketch of the History of Asylums or Sanctuaries, by the Rev. Mr. Pegge, *Archæologia*, vol. viii.

\* Hospin, p. 79.

established this regulation in his church. Penitentiary discipline received considerable alterations and improvements from this prelate, who, from the canons of the Greek and Latin churches, published a Penitential Office, which distinguished the degrees of atrocity in different sins, according to their nature and consequences, and appointed the penalties suitable to the various degrees of transgression. From England this book extended throughout the west; and became the model of various publications, similar in their nature, but in their execution far inferior,

## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE SEVENTH  
CENTURY.

*Monothelites — Aginians — Chazinarrians — Gnosmachi —  
Lampetians — Ercetæ — Paulicians — Their Opinions —  
Persecution — Resistance.*

THE history of the Monothelites was so closely interwoven with the general transactions of the seventh century, that little more can be necessary to be added concerning them. The orthodox belief, that Jesus Christ was possessed of the wills and operations peculiar both to his divinity and humanity, was first opposed by Theodore, bishop of Pharon, who contended that the humanity was so united to the divinity, that, although it fully possessed its own faculties, yet its operation must be ascribed to the divinity. Cyrus, bishop of Phasis, adopted the opinions of Theodore; and the sect of which they were the leaders were termed Monothelites, from their affirming that the two natures in Christ were so constituted, that he possessed only one will and one operation, which they termed Theandric. Protected and nurtured by imperial approbation, the Monothelites became a very considerable sect. The decisions of the sixth general council

council at Constantinople determined that their opinions were not consistent with the purity of the Christian faith; the Monothelites were formally condemned; and, though sometimes the objects of royal favour, were in general contemned and depressed. Thus persecuted, they retired to the neighbourhood of Mount Libanus, but in the twelfth century abjured their schismatical opinions, and were admitted into communion with the Romish church. Our concern for the difficulties they sustained after their condemnation, cannot but be lessened by a consideration of the cruelties which in the day of their power they were tempted to commit against their orthodox brethren. The Abyssinian church appears still to have retained the opinions of the Monothelites; and has continued to disown the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, and the greater part of the doctrines of the Romish church.

In an age of gross ignorance, and in which the spirit of inquiry was checked by ecclesiastical censures and imperial laws, few deviations from established opinions were likely to arise. The greater part of the sects of this period were indeed of small importance and short duration. Amongst the principal of them were the Aginians, who condemned matrimony, and the use of certain meats; the Chazarinians, who were adorers of the cross; the Gnosimachi, who opposed the tenets of Gnosticism; the Ercetæ, who affirmed that, in order to render prayer



prayer acceptable to God, it should be performed dancing ; and the Lampetians, who asserted that man ought to perform no action against his free agency, whence all vows were undoubtedly unlawful ; in all other respects this sect professed the doctrines of Arianism.

Whether we contemplate the importance, the duration, or the effects which they are believed to have produced, the Paulicians are undoubtedly the most considerable sect of the seventh century. According to the opinions of some celebrated writers, this sect derived its appellation from the attachment of its professors to the apostle Paul. Their teachers represented the four disciples of the apostle of the Gentiles ; the names of the apostolic churches were applied to the congregations which they assembled ; and the Epistles of Paul, together with the Gospels, were carefully investigated by the Paulicians, who contended that in these books was contained every article of primitive Christianity. They openly rejected the validity of the Old Testament, and the Epistles of St. Peter : they disclaimed the visions which had been published by the oriental sects ; condemned the doctrines of Manes, and complained of the injustice of being considered as his followers. Every object of superstition was despised and abhorred by these primitive reformers. Yet their doctrines were not exempted from absurdity : instead of confessing the human nature and substantial sufferings  
of

of Christ, they amused their fancy with a celestial body, which passed through the virgin, like water through a pipe; and with a fantastic crucifixion, that eluded the impotent malice of the Jews. Their unphilosophical creed extended also to the eternity of matter.

The teachers of this sect were only distinguished by their scriptural names, by their zeal or knowledge, and by the austerity and simplicity of their lives. Their disciples were considerably multiplied, not only in Armenia, their original station, but in Pontus and Cappadocia. They were however soon involved in the horrors of persecution; and during the period of one hundred and fifty years their patience sustained whatever evils misguided zeal could inflict. Michael I. and Leo the Armenian were foremost in the race of persecution; but the prize was obtained by the empress Theodora, who restored the images to the oriental churches, and under whose reign one hundred thousand Paulicians (under which odious name it is probable several Iconoclasts were included) were extirpated. In conjunction with the Saracens, this persecuted sect resisted in arms the intolerant emperors of the east; and the son of Theodora fled before the heretics whom his mother had condemned to the flames. The insurgents penetrated into the heart of Asia, repeatedly overthrew the imperial troops; and for more than a century the Paulicians continued to defend their religion and liberty.

Inflexible in their opinions, and unconquerable either by imperial arms or arguments\*, the Paulicians continued to dissent both from the Greek and Latin churches. In the beginning of the thirteenth century, their primate resided on the confines of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Dalmatia, and governed by his vicars the filial congregations of Italy and France. At the close of the seventeenth century, the sect still inhabited the vallies of Mount Hæmus, tormented by the Greek clergy, and greatly corrupted in their religious tenets. In the west, if indeed they penetrated into the west, the favour and success of the Paulicians must be imputed to the powerful though secret discontent, which animated the most pious Christians against the church of Rome. They are conceived by some to be the leaders of the venerable band who settled in the country of the Albigeois, in the southern provinces of France, who purified their creed from all the visions of the Gnostic theology, and became the intrepid opposers of every superstition and usurpation of the church, and the glorious leaders of the reformation.

\* Alexius Comnenus attempted, but, as might be expected, attempted in vain, to eradicate their prejudices by his persuasion.

## C H A P. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
SEVENTH CENTURY.

*Decline of Learning—Greeks fond of intricate Theological Questions—Timotheus—Anastasius—Philoponus—Conon—Eusebius—Nicias—Julian Pomerius—Thomas, Bishop of Heraclea—Paterius—Hesychius—Isidore—General Ignorance of Ethics—Antiochus—Leontius—John Moschus—Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury—Tayon, Bishop of Saragessa—Ildefonsus—Maximus—John, the Monk—Adhelm, Abbot of Malmfbury—George Pisides.*

**F**ROM the increasing ignorance of that body of men, to whom literature, in the ages which preceded and which succeeded this period of barbarism, has been indebted for the most important services, it may naturally be inferred that the cause of learning must necessarily decline ; and that, amongst a people immersed in superstition and ignorance, few good writers would be found. Few indeed were they in number, and small and confined were the labours of that few. True philosophy, which had gradually receded, now disappeared, and scarcely left a trace by which her footsteps upon earth could be discerned. Logical distinctions and subtle sophisms usurped her place, and were applied to the investigation of every difficult point, which, if they

they found not already sufficiently obscure, they enveloped in a cloud, into which the most discerning eye could scarcely pervade.

The taste for investigating difficult theological questions was much more prevalent amongst the Greeks than the Latins; and we consequently find many more controversial writers in the eastern empire. Timotheus, in a work concerning the reception of heretics, attacked the various heresies which divided the Church. Particular errors in doctrine were assailed by various writers. The Monothelites by Maximus, and his disciple Anastasius. Paganism was assaulted by Philoponus, the grammarian, of Alexandria, and chief of the sect of the Tritheists, in a discourse concerning idols, which was intended to refute the assertions of the philosopher Jamblichus; but his zeal against paganism was not sufficient to screen him from the imputation of maintaining heretical opinions himself. Conon and Eusebius, his two disciples, attacked his opinion of the three natures in God: and Nicias, who had exerted his abilities against the enemies of Christianity, refuted several of the erroneous opinions of Philoponus; and composed a discourse against the heretic Severus, one of the leaders of the sect of the Corrupticolæ. Julian Pomerius, who had attempted, but unsuccessfully, the explanation of some difficult passages in the sacred writings, obtained some applause by his arguments against the Jews.



Very few of the writers of this century attempted to elucidate and explain the Holy Scriptures. Collections were indeed made from the writings of former ages, and particularly from those of Augustin and Gregory the Great. Thomas, bishop of Heraclea, composed a second Syriac version of all the books of the New Testament. Paterius published an Exposition both of the Old Testament and the New. Hesychius, priest of Jerusalem, wrote some commentaries upon the Book of Leviticus, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The zealous Maximus, whose labours in the church were not confined to the discussion of any one matter respecting religion, published a Solution of several Questions relating to the sacred Scriptures.—But it is not amongst the writers of this century that we are to expect either sound argument or clear expression. Isidore, bishop of Seville, composed some Commentaries upon the Holy Scriptures, and wrote an Abridgment of the Arts and Sciences; some Treatises of Grammar and Philosophy; several Moral Discourses, and other literary works. This illustrious prelate, who derived his origin from Theodoric, king of Italy, presided near forty years over the church of Seville; and was one of the few characters of the seventh century, who did not conceive the knowledge of human learning to be incompatible with the practice of religion.

If, in contemplating the annals of this period, we are compelled to observe the gross deviations  
from

from rectitude in the conduct of mankind; a perusal of the moral writers of this century will convince us, that, if the science of ethics was not practised, it was scarcely understood. Superstition had sapped the foundations of moral knowledge; and the venerable fabric, instead of being supported by those whose interest and duty were concerned in its preservation, was in several places secretly undermined, and its ruin nearly completed, by the practice of those fanatical vagaries, which were esteemed a full compensation for the neglect of the great duties of life. A Pandect of the Holy Scriptures, upon the Duties of Christians, was published by Antiochus, a monk of Palestine. The mystical morality of Maximus, that of Hesychius, and of the few other moral writers of this century, was little calculated to promote the interests of genuine virtue.

The historical writers of this period are not entitled to a very exalted eulogium. The lives of the saints, a favourite species of composition in this superstitious age, were degraded by absurdity, and an endless train of wonders and miracles. Leontius, bishop of Cyprus, composed the Memoirs of John the Almoner, bishop of Alexandria, whose virtues were entitled to the affection and applause of his contemporaries. George, the successor of John in the Alexandrian see, wrote a Life of Chrysostom, which is unhappily distinguished only by its falsehood. It yields however, in absurdity, to

*The Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus, a priest and monk, which contains a relation of the actions and miracles of the hermits of different countries ; and details not only the contests which were endured by these holy men with the world and the flesh, but their conversations with evil spirits, their conflicts with dæmons, and their victories over whole legions of the powers of darkness.

The celebrated Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, has been already noticed. This eminent ecclesiastic was a native of Tarsus, in Cilicia, and was appointed by the pontiff Vitalianus to the see of Canterbury ; but was obliged to defer his consecration for three months after his arrival in England, on account of his head being shaven in the manner of the eastern monks. The Romish see acquired a powerful advocate in Theodore, who adopted the rites and ceremonies of that church ; and extended the jurisdiction of the see of Canterbury, by the concurrence of the Saxon kings, over all England. Before his death, he had the additional satisfaction of seeing the Scottish church united to the Roman see, adopting all her ceremonies, and acknowledging the authority of his own metropolitan church. His Penitentiary is the only celebrated part of his literary labours.

The writers on theological subjects were little, if at all, superior to their contemporaries in the other branches of literature. A body of divinity, extracted from the works of Gregory and Augustin,

was composed by Tayon, bishop of Saragossa; and the doctrines of theology, derived from the same source, were brought together by several other writers, in a similar manner. The best epitome of divinity, collected in this century, was that by Ildefonsus, bishop of Toledo, a prelate distinguished for his erudition and abilities; who composed, besides his Sermons, a work upon the Ecclesiastical Writers, and some Letters. Maximus, a warm and vehement opponent of the Monothelites, who had tinged his pen with the gall of controversy, and was a commentator, and a writer of morality, drew up also, though by no means in a masterly style, a work concerning the Nature of Theology. This monk, whose active and vindictive temper suffered him not to remain an idle spectator of the controversial affairs of this period, and whose talents raised him to the highest station amongst the Greek authors of this century, was descended from a noble family at Constantinople, where he enjoyed the post of secretary of state to the emperor Heraclius. Hence he retired to the monastery of Chrysopolis, of which he became the abbot: but the apprehensions of the incursions of the barbarians, and the erroneous opinions propagated at Constantinople, compelled him to retire into the west; and he settled in Africa. Internal tranquillity was not, however, his object in this retreat. He fulminated his denunciations against the heresy of the Monothelites; and excited



the African bishops, and the pontiff of Rome, to declare their detestation of those heretics, and of the Type of the emperor Constans. Maximus was followed in his retreat by the Monothelite Pyrrhus, who had been compelled by Constans to abandon the Byzantine see. Here the angry combatants again entered the lists of controversy; and the opinions of one will, or of two wills, in Christ, were espoused by their numerous respective adherents. The African bishops, alarmed at a contention which disturbed the tranquillity of their church, applied to the governor to summon Pyrrhus and his opponent to a public discussion of their opinions. They met in the presence of the governor, the bishops, and the assembled nobility. Each of the contending parties offered his reasons; and every sophism, every subtlety, that ingenuity could devise, were exerted in the debate; at the close of which, the politic Pyrrhus, who required the protection of the bishop of Rome, affected to be converted by the arguments of his opponent; and, though he afterwards retracted his confession, abjured, first in Africa, and afterwards at Rome, the heretical doctrine of one will. The attempt of the Byzantine monk to oppose the celebrated decree of Constans was not, however, equally successful. He was forcibly conveyed back to Constantinople, by the commands of the emperor; whence he was banished to Byzica, a small village in Thrace. Again he was recalled to the imperial court: but banishment



ment had not subdued his spirit; and again his contumacy, or his zeal for the truth, was punished by his being publicly scourged through the twelve districts of the city, and by the cruel deprivation of his tongue and his right hand. His disciple Anastasius participated in the guilt and the sufferings of his friend. Thus mutilated, the unhappy Maximus was not permitted the sad privilege of undisturbed sorrow; he was imprisoned in a strong castle, where he closed a life spent in the most active exertions, in what he probably considered as the cause of the church.

The praises of the Virgin employed the rhetorical powers of John, the monk, who wrote several Sermons to her honour. Adhelm, abbot of Malmshbury, composed several treatises upon her Virginity, both in prose and verse; and George Pisides has in his Sermons celebrated the virtues of the Virgin in lofty strains.

## THE EIGHTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Justinian II.—His Licentiousness and Cruelty—Philippicus—Professes Monothelism—Breaks down the Images—Anastasius—Leo the Isaurian—Iconoclastic Controversy renewed—Violent Commotions—Constantine Copronymus—Council of Constantinople—Leo III.—Irene—Her Vices—Dethrones and murders her Son—Council of Nice—Idolatry re-established—Inursions of the Saracens—Conquer Spain, &c.—Increase of the Papal Authority—Alliance with the Carolingian Family—Unjust Deposition of Childeric—Charlemagne—His Ambition—Declared Emperor of the West—Image Worship not allowed by the French Clergy—Dissensions between the Greek and Latin Churches concerning the Procession of the Holy Ghost—Other Causes of Dissension—Character of Charlemagne.*

THE interference of the emperors in matters of religion had, as was formerly observed, occasioned violent commotions in the empire and the church. Under Justinian II. who reigned at the

the beginning of this century, they were not destined to experience greater tranquillity from the profligacy and wickedness of the emperor, than they had formerly derived from the absurd attempts of his predecessors to compose religious differences. Justinian\* was, both in principle and practice, inimical to virtue, and consequently to the happiness of his subjects; and, without intermeddling in theological disputes, he contrived to harass and distress the church. The destruction of buildings dedicated to religion will always, in some degree,

\* This tyrant revenged the design of his subjects, the inhabitants of Chersona and the Bosphorus, to deliver him to his rival Tiberius (in order to avert the horrors of civil war), by a command for the extirpation of all ranks, without distinction of sex or age, of guilt or innocence, who inhabited those districts. These orders were in part obeyed by the soldiery, who dispatched the aged inhabitants, either by the sword, by throwing them into the sea, or by burning them alive: but the tears, the entreaties, and the innocence of the children melted the obdurate hearts of these ministers of vengeance, and they consented to spare their lives. Mercy however was not congenial to the soul of Justinian: he was transported with rage at the disobedience of his command; and issued fresh orders for the massacre of those innocent victims. Cruelty is seldom a solitary vice; and the character of Justinian was marked by perfidy to his allies, and by ingratitude towards his benefactors. Trebelis, king of the Bulgarians, who had entertained him, when a fugitive, not only with hospitality but magnificence, and whose exertions had assisted in re-establishing him on the imperial throne, was rewarded by the invasion of his country; where, however, the ungrateful Justinian met with a repulse; his army was defeated, and he was compelled to make an ignominious retreat.

be repugnant to the feelings of a virtuous mind ; and, in a superstitious age, the demolition of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, for the erection of a banqueting-house, was an offence which was calculated to excite the most violent detestation against the emperor. Nor was this the only instance in which he consulted the gratification of his passions at the expence of the clergy. In revenge for his attachment to his rival Leontius, he commanded the eyes of the patriarch Callinicus to be put out ; and, in addition to this inhuman punishment, banished the unhappy patriarch to Rome, where he had the mortification of depending, for a precarious subsistence, upon the Roman pontiff, whose authority he had always opposed and contemned.

Philippicus, his successor, resumed the imperial exertions for the extinction of erroneous opinions. The heterodox cause of Monothelism reared her dejected head under this emperor, who was a zealous adherent to the opinions of that sect ; and whose example and influence promoted their interests amongst persons of the most exalted rank and dignity. His zeal for Monothelism was demonstrated by every insult which could be shewn to whatever had opposed the establishment of his favourite opinion. He convened a synod, which was easily induced to condemn the sixth general council ; and the picture of this assembly, which had reprobated his darling prejudices, was indignantly torn from the walls of  
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the great church of St. Sophia, and demolished, by the command of the emperor, and the consent of the obsequious patriarch. This measure, the first that was adopted in a contest which rent asunder the peace of the church during the remainder of this century, was followed by an order, transmitted to the Roman pontiff, for the demolition of all pictures or images which adorned the walls of the churches. But the haughty Constantine received not these commands with submission, nor consented to obey them. He opposed, by a formal protest, the imperial edict; and demonstrated his contempt of the order, by immediately placing pictures of the sixth general council against the walls of St. Peter's church: and, in a synod which he convened at Rome, he not only condemned the conduct of Philippicus, in this instance, but excommunicated him as a heretic; pronounced him unworthy of the empire, and authorised and exhorted his subjects to revolt. Whoever regards the measures taken by either party, as altogether the effect of religious principle, will probably be mistaken. Philippicus might have suffered the offending picture to decorate the walls of the great church, had it not perpetuated and aggravated the remembrance of a council, which had anathematized opinions that had met with his approbation; and Constantine would perhaps have submitted to the edict of the emperor, had he not wished for an opportunity of discarding the authority of the Byzantine



tine court, and asserting the independence of the Roman see.

The punishment, which was justly incurred by this contumelious and arrogant behaviour of the Roman pontiff, was prevented by the violent and sudden death of Philippicus. His successor Anastasius, a man of learning, and a zealous catholic, was little disposed to resent the indignities offered by the Roman pontiff. In the short period of his reign, he endeavoured to repair the breaches which had been made in the peace of the church : but he was soon compelled to resign the imperial diadem; and assumed the habit of a monk, in order to preserve his life.

Leo the Isaurian, who was invested with the purple in the year 716, had been gradually raised from the station of a private soldier in the guards of Justinian. He was crowned by the patriarch Germanus ; and engaged, by a solemn oath, to defend and preserve the orthodox cause, and to continue a decided enemy to Monothelism. His zeal in the cause of Christianity was indeed manifested at an early period of his reign. In 721, a Syrian impostor had seduced the Jews, on the pretence of being their expected Messiah, and had occasioned several disturbances. Leo, through a mistaken zeal to advance the truths of religion, enacted a law against the Jews, compelling them to receive baptism\*, and to conform to the religion of the empire.

\* Theoph. Cedren. Zonar. in Leone Isaurio.

Under this emperor, the contests concerning image-worship, which had for some time lain dormant, were again revived ; measures against the prevalence of this pernicious superstition were conceived, and executed with resolution and intrepidity ; and sharp and continued tumults agitated the whole Christian world. Synods clashed against synods ; the miraculous efficacy of those painted pageants was insisted upon ; the saints declared the justice of their cause by signs and portents ; and the charges of idolatry and impiety were reciprocally and virulently applied to each other by the contending parties.

The emperor was charged with being perverted by the Mahometans, who had not only sneered at the Christians for their attachment to images, but had actively demonstrated their abhorrence of this superstition, and attempted its abolition. The caliph Yezid, instigated by a Jew, had commanded all the images in the Christian churches of his dominions to be destroyed ; and in 726, Leo published a severe edict against this species of idolatry, in which he strictly prohibited their receiving any kind of worship and adoration, and commanded them to be removed from all the churches. The prejudices of the multitude, however, are not to be subverted by royal edicts ; and this cause, which they imagined the cause of Heaven itself against a disobedient and impious monarch, was supported by legions, who flocked with eagerness

to the standards of the degraded saints, and to that of the patriarch Germanus, who preached and who wrote in their defence. The emperor deposed the disobedient prelate, and raised the pliant Anastasius to the vacant see. But their united efforts were ineffectual: the people believed themselves released from their obedience to an impious apostate, who had betrayed the faith; and beholding with horror the images of their Saviour and of the saints ignominiously torn in pieces, or burned by the command of Leo, they assembled in a tumultuous manner, demolished the statues and pictures\* of the emperor, and surrounded the gates of the royal palace; but, after being repulsed with great slaughter, they were compelled to a temporary compliance with the offensive edict.

The successful struggle of Leo, for the demolition of idolatry in the imperial city, did not, however, influence the conduct of his subjects in the other parts of the empire, nor render his measures acceptable to the Roman see. The horrors of civil discord raged in the islands of the Archipelago, in Asia, and in Italy. Gregory II. who had opposed, with great vehemence, the attempts of the emperor, respecting image-worship, endeavoured to soften his resentment, by claiming great merit from the measures he had taken in Italy, in re-

\* Pictures of eminent men, such as the emperors or bishops, were placed in the churches about the same time that the pictures of saints and martyrs obtained that situation.

straining the growing power of the Lombards ; and wrote to Leo, earnestly entreating a revocation of the imperial edict. But the emperor, zealously attached to the cause he had espoused, and entirely convinced that Gregory had been actuated rather by motives of self-interest than a regard for the empire, was so far from acceding to this request, that he dispatched private orders to the exarch of Ravenna, and to the governor of Rome, to apprehend the contentious prelate, and send him to Constantinople. The people of Rome were too little attached to the emperor, to suffer the execution of this order ; the bishop excommunicated the exarch ; and by letters exhorted the Venetians, with Luitprand, king of the Lombards, and all the cities of the empire, to continue steadfast in the catholic faith.

Not satisfied with this mark of opposition, Gregory absolved the people of Rome from their allegiance to the emperor ; it is also reported that he occasioned the tribute, which had been annually paid from Rome and Italy into the imperial treasury, to be withheld. This step was the signal of revolt : the imperial officers were massacred or banished ; the people of Rome refused to acknowledge the authority of the emperor, and chose new magistrates ; the inhabitants of Ravenna submitted to the dominion of Luitprand ; and the inhabitants of Naples murdered their duke, Exhilaratus, the imperial governor, together with his son, and

one of his principal officers. Leo, exasperated by these proceedings, confiscated the revenues which had been paid from Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia, to the Roman pontiff, and subjected the clergy of those countries, and the various churches of Illyricum, to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Byzantine see.

The emperor opposed the worship of images with reiterated fury; and enforced his prohibition by threatening the guilty opposer of his laws with severe and exemplary punishments. A favourite image of Christ, which was destroyed, was the signal of another rebellion; and the adorers of images, who were called Iconolatæ\*, and their opponents the Iconoclastæ†, mutually resisted, detested, and persecuted each other.

The death of Leo, and that of Gregory III. who died the same year, and whose attachment to image-worship had not been less decisive than that of his predecessor, did not restore tranquillity to the church and the empire. Leo was succeeded by his son Constantine Copronymus‡, who renewed his father's edict, and spoke in equally pointed

\* From εἰκών, an image, and λατρεύω, to worship.

† From εἰκών, and κλάω, to break.

‡ Copronymus was a name conferred upon him from the circumstance of his having defiled the sacred font at his baptism. This circumstance is reported to have occasioned the prediction of Germanus, the patriarch, that the infant would, at a future time, prove a source of great disturbance to the Church. Hist. Miscel.



terms against the practice of idolatry. He chose, however, to enforce his opinions upon the people by the milder and universally-acknowledged authority of a general council, rather than by the mandates of an imperial law. In 754, he convened at Constantinople a council, consisting of 338 bishops, in which not only the worship but the use of images was unanimously condemned. A considerable destruction of the objects of idolatrous worship ensued. The decrees of the assembly, which the Greeks regarded as the seventh general council, were received by great numbers, though not universally, even in the eastern churches, but were utterly rejected at Rome. The opposition made by this rational but too zealous emperor to the reigning superstition, was not confined to the worship of images: he opposed the invocation of saints, and the adoration of relics; and evinced his confirmed abhorrence of the monks, whom he regarded as the great supporters of superstition. An edict was published at Constantinople, and in all the cities of the empire, forbidding any person to embrace a monastic life, under severe penalties\*. At Constantinople, most of the religious houses were suppressed; and the monks compelled not only to marry, but to lead their brides in public procession through the streets. Leo III. who succeeded Constantine in 775, was not more favourable to the cause of idolatry than his progenitors: he openly

\* Theoph. ad Ann. Const. 19, &c. ad Ann. Const. 19, 23.

declared his abhorrence of image-worship; and punished with severity those who had presumed to pay any kind of adoration to the saints, to the Virgin Mary, or to their images\*. The zeal of Leo for the propagation of religion was gratified by the conversion of Elrich, monarch of the Bulgarians, who, impelled by an irresistible desire to embrace Christianity, resigned his crown, and repaired to Constantinople, where he was entertained by Leo with every demonstration of affection and esteem; and, after he had received the sacrament of baptism, was created a patrician, and married to a relation of the empress.

The infant son of Leo, who was but ten years of age, was the nominal successor of his father: but the reins of government were assumed by the ambitious Irene, who transacted all the affairs of the empire; and not only resisted the efforts, which, at a more mature age, were made by her son to throw off her yoke, with intrepidity and success, but with her own hands chastised him for his temerity. This weak prince, who appears to have continued, with the exception of a few intervals, under the supreme government of this artful and profligate woman, occasioned great contests amongst the clergy by

\* Such was the detestation which Leo had conceived against images, that, having found two of them in the possession of the empress Irene, he is said to have refused to cohabit with her afterwards. *Univ. Hist.* b. xv. p. 45. A sudden and premature death gave but too much colour to the suspicion, that the empress had revenged this affront.

divorcing himself from his first wife Mary, and, at the instigation of Irene, espousing another. The flagitious empress was not however contented with rendering him odious in the eyes of his people : by her orders he was at length seized, and tormented with the most shocking cruelty ; and by his death, and that of the brothers of her late husband, she seated herself without a rival upon the imperial throne. The atrocious conduct of Irene was justified, in the eyes of the friends of image-worship, by her zeal in their defence ; many eulogiums were composed to the honour of so pious a princess, who was afterwards converted into a saint, and, as such, stands recorded in the Greek Calendar\*.

Under the administration of Irene, the Iconolatæ enjoyed not only a respite from their sufferings, but the utmost protection and favour. New images decorated the walls which had lately been deprived of their ornaments ; and she adopted the popular measure of annulling the edicts of former emperors against the worship of idols. In 786, in concert with Adrian bishop of Rome, a council was

\* This melancholy instance of the dominion of prejudice is far from singular. Baronius is pleased to consider Irene as actuated not by ambition, but by zeal for religion ; and has justified the inhuman treatment and deposition of her son, by texts extracted both from the Old and New Testament. Baron. Ann. 796. p. 482. An attempt was lately made to excuse the detestable slave-trade in the same manner.

The ivth chap. of St. Matthew, ver. 6. will shew *who* was the author of this kind of quotation. H.

convened by the emperor Constantine at Constantinople; but, being disturbed by the officers of the army and the soldiery, it was in the following year transferred to Nice in Bithynia\*, where the impiety of the image-breakers was severely condemned, the adoration of images and of the cross re-established, and severe punishments were denounced against the daring transgressors of the established rites. The superstitious dogmas of this assembly were supported by false records and spurious manuscripts, and confirmed by a chain of such arguments as admirably suited the wisdom of the cause. The assembled fathers expressed their abhorrence of images made to represent the Deity; but gave a full sanction to the crucifix, which they commanded to be solemnly dedicated, and placed upon the walls of churches or private houses, and upon the public roads. Images of our Lord were also to be made, as well as of the Virgin Mary (who was called the *immaculate Mother of God*), of the venerable angels, and of all the saints.

This species of worship was so passionately admired by the Greeks, that they esteemed the second Nicene council as a signal blessing derived to them from the interposition of Heaven; and, in commemoration of it, instituted an anniversary

\* The decrees of the Council of Constantinople, under Constantine Copronymus, were so obnoxious to the Romish church, that they have expunged its decrees, and consider this convened at Nice as the seventh general council.



festival, called the Feast of Orthodoxy. In this council the legate of the bishop of Rome attempted, in the name of his master, to explain the worship due to the saints, as an inferior kind of homage, which he called *dulia*; the adoration due to the Supreme Being was said to be of a more exalted nature, and was called *latria*. The versatile bishops, who under the former reigns had professed their dislike to the worship of the saints, scrupled not to make their peace with Irene, and to secure their continuance in their possessions, by a recantation of those opinions which were deemed heretical by the second council of Nice. Deplorable was the state of the eastern empire during the eighth century: government was weakened by perpetual revolutions for electing or deposing different emperors. Military discipline decayed; learning was neglected or despised; every species of atrocity was practised under the mask of religious zeal; and the empire was repeatedly invaded. In Syria and Palestine, several cities were destroyed by dreadful earthquakes; an extraordinary darkness, which lasted from the beginning of August to October, and occasioned little distinction between night and day, overspread that country; and this was followed by the plague, which broke out in Calabria, soon spread over Sicily, Greece, and the islands in the Ægean sea, and at length reached to Constantinople, where it raged furiously during a space of three years.



The incursions of the Saracens were grievously felt both in the eastern and western provinces. In the reign of Philippicus, these fierce barbarians invaded Thrace, took the city of Pergamus, and committed dreadful ravages in various parts of the empire: they even marched up to the gates of the imperial city; and during thirteen months, in which they besieged Constantinople, war, famine, and the pestilence successively prevailed. To add to the affliction of the eastern Christians, the caliph Omar, exasperated at the courage and resolution of those patriots, who compelled him to abandon the design of taking the capital of the east, vented his chagrin against his Christian subjects, by first prohibiting them the exercise of their religion, and soon afterwards by commanding the renunciation of their faith, and the profession of Mahometanism, upon pain of death. So circumstanced, it is not wonderful that the weak, the indifferent, or the timid, should yield to the will of their intolerant masters. Christianity was in some places entirely extirpated; but a few still maintained, with unshaken constancy, the religion of Christ at the hazard of their lives. In 714 the Saracens invaded Spain, and destroyed the empire of the Visigoths in that country, which had been established for upwards of 300 years\*. Their

\* The conductor of this enterprize was called *Tarich*, who having encamped on the eminence which commands the bay of Cadiz, occasioned it to be named *Gebal-Tarich*, or *the mount of Tarich*, which by corruption is now styled *Gibraltar*. H.  
conquests

conquests extended to the maritime coasts of Gaul, and to the islands of Sicily and Sardinia : wherever they settled, these ferocious barbarians attempted to propagate the doctrines of Mahomet, and to abolish a religion so opposite to all their favourite principles. In Spain and Sardinia, the Christians suffered the most severe oppressions from the rigid laws which were enacted by their barbarous conquerors.

The irruption and settlement of the Saracens in the south, the fierce and bloody conflicts of barbarous and pagan nations in the north, and the universal corruption of religion, and decay of learning, exhibit a gloomy picture of the state of Europe during the eighth century. Amidst this wreck of virtue and excellence, the papal power attained during this century to an unexpected height ; and that alliance was formed between superstition and despotism, which for succeeding ages proved the scourge of mankind. To trace these great events to their source, it will be necessary to direct our attention more particularly to the state of Italy, and to its connections with foreign powers.

Ravenna, which, together with several other cities in Italy, was not in the power of the Lombards, but governed by an officer of the emperor, who had the title of Exarch, had, in the revolt against the edict of Leo, fallen into the hands of Luitprand, king of the Lombards. Gregory,  
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the Roman pontiff, could not however behold, without apprehension, the increase of a power which in time might become inimical to his authority; he therefore engaged Ursus, duke of Venice, to assert the rights of the empire, and to retake the cities of the exarchate during the absence of Luitprand, by whom they were again subdued in a succeeding popular revolt. Incensed at Gregory III. who had received into his protection Thrasimund, duke of Spoletta, the daring revolter against the king of the Lombards, Aistulphus, the successor of Luitprand, besieged and subdued Ravenna, and terminated the race of exarchs, who had reigned with a delegated authority from the time of Justinian.

The trembling pontiff, in dread of an invasion from this incensed Lombard, solicited the assistance of Charles Martel, mayor of the palace to Childeric, king of the Franks, whose power might be serviceable in repressing the enemies of Gregory; though the indifference he had demonstrated to the interests of the clergy, in distributing abbeys and bishoprics to the laity, and assigning the tithes to his soldiers, had afforded no very favourable specimen of his regard for the church. The effects of this negociation were prevented by the deaths of Charles and of Gregory. The new pontiff Zachary became reconciled to Luitprand; and, considering the weakness of the imperial power in Europe,

Europe, embraced the opportunity to disavow an authority which at this time was little more than nominal.

The alliance, however, between France and the Roman see did not end here. Pepin, the son of Charles, succeeded to the office of his father; but not content with the power, which in virtue of his employment he enjoyed, of regulating all the affairs of the kingdom, he aspired to the title of king, and formed the design of deposing the weak and unfortunate Childeric. The enormous powers which had been acquired by the Roman pontiff over the successors of the barbarian conquerors of the western provinces, made it unsafe to transact so important an affair without his concurrence; and Pepin was by his devoted servants, the states of the realm, advised to consult the pope to resolve the question—"Who best deserved to be king—he who was possessed of the power, or he who was only possessed of the title?" The necessities of the party consulted were not less than those of Pepin; and Zachary, oppressed by the apprehension both of the Lombards and Greeks, declared that, in his opinion, he ought rather to be styled a monarch who was invested with the powers attached to that office, than he who possessed only the regal title. The last descendant of Clovis was in consequence of this decision immediately divested of the external marks of royalty; and, with his infant son, compelled to assume the monastic



tic habit, and to retire from the pleasures and engagements of public life to the solitude of a cloister. —Stephen, the successor of Zachary, was not less favourable to the perfidious Pepin. In a journey which he made into France, he absolved the usurper from his oath of allegiance to the deposed king, anointed him, and invested him with the regal crown. The object of Stephen in this journey was not, however, to confirm the aggrandisement of Pepin. He wanted his assistance against the increasing power of the Lombards; and enforced his entreaties not only by promises both of temporal prosperity and eternal happiness, but by denunciations of inevitable damnation if he refused to comply. He preached not in vain. Pepin, whose ambition had made him regardless of the rights of his sovereign, was from the same principle obedient and grateful to that power which had secured the crown to his posterity. He entered Italy with his army; and, after several encounters, compelled the Lombard king to surrender the possession of all those territories which the Greek emperors had possessed in Italy, into the hands of the bishop of Rome. The grant of twenty-two cities was the liberal demonstration of Pepin's gratitude to the pontiff, or it was the expiation by which he attempted to compensate for his perfidy and treason. Pepin by this liberal grant secured a temporal principality to the successors of the poor and humble Peter.

The alliance between the king of the Franks



and the pontiff of Rome was confirmed by mutual necessities, and strengthened by mutual obligations. In the pontificate of Adrian I. the restless and enterprising Lombards invaded the provinces which had been granted by Pepin to the pope. His son Charlemagne did not, however, permit them to resume their authority; he asserted the rights of the Roman see; and entering with a powerful army into Italy, subdued the Lombards, assumed to himself the title of their king, and was crowned at Rome in the year 774. Additional donations to the pope, and a confirmation of the grants bestowed by his father, were the fruits of this additional extent of dominion to Charlemagne. Several cities and provinces were ceded by him to the Roman see, under the specious pretext of atoning for his sins, by munificence to the church. But to the policy, rather than to the piety of the monarch, must his liberality be ascribed. Such indeed was his thirst of dominion, that he is believed to have dispatched an embassy to Constantinople, to propose a matrimonial union between himself and the ambitious Irene. This proposal, which might have accomplished the re-union of the eastern and western empires, was counteracted by the intrigues of a favourite eunuch, and the spirit of the Grecian nobles: the infamous princess was confined first in a monastery, and afterwards banished to the island of Lesbos, where the anguish of disappointed ambition shortened a life, which was long

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since forfeited to justice by repeated crimes. Disappointed therefore in this project, Charlemagne secretly aspired after the title of Emperor of the West; and his magnificent donations were intended to conciliate the affection of the pontiff, and to engage him in the promotion of his designs\*. Amongst the other gratifications to the pope, Charlemagne granted an injunction for introducing the Gregorian office, and mode of singing into the churches of France and Germany, in conformity with that of Rome. Leo was not ungrateful for these favours: on Christmas-day in the year 800, he conferred upon his munificent and obedient patron the object of his ardent aspirations, and saluted him with the title of Emperor, in the church of St. Peter at Rome, amidst the acclamations of the Roman people. Leo was rewarded for his assistance by the grant of jurisdiction over the city of Rome, and the adjacent territories, which were however subordinate to the supreme dominion of the western emperor.

Entire agreement between Charlemagne and the Roman pontiff, in matters of faith, was not the bond by which they were united; theirs was the political connection of mutual interest, not of religion. Charlemagne, by the advice of the French prelates, who were no friends to the second council

\* From the acquisition of these donations may the dominion of the Roman pontiff be most properly dated, rather than from the pretended donation of Constantine the Great. H.

of Nice, had ordered a judicious divine to compose *Four Books concerning Images*\*, which refuted the absurd decrees of the Nicene assembly with judgment and with spirit. These books he sent in 790 to the Roman pontiff Adrian, who attempted to answer and refute the objections of Charlemagne. The prince however, in 794, assembled a council, composed of three hundred bishops, at Frankfort, in which the important question concerning the worship due to images was agitated and examined. In this council, the opinion supported in the *Four Books*, of the lawfulness and expediency of placing pictures in churches, either as ornaments to the building, or as useful in refreshing the memory, was allowed, but the worship of them absolutely forbidden; and, according to the testimony of Roger Hovedon and other English writers, the British churches assented to this decision.

The first idea of transubstantiation appears to have arisen during this century, though it was long before it was generally adopted, or before it assumed the name. The Constantinopolitan fathers in 754, amongst other things against images, having said that Christ had no otherwise left us an image of himself than in the eucharist; the Nicene fathers in 787, alleged in opposition that this was not the image of Christ, but his very body and

\* These books, which obtained, from the name of the emperor, the title of the Caroline Books, were published about three years after the Council of Nice.

432      *Contests between the Patriarchs.* [CENT. 8.  
blood, which first assertion of this monstrous absurdity, as well as many others, was made by the *Iconolatæ*, or worshippers of images.

The investigation of the important question respecting images, was not the sole difficulty by which the consciences of the Christians were distracted during this century. The Greeks reproached the Latin church with having added the word *filioque* to the Byzantine creed, and asserted that the Divine Spirit proceeded only from the Father; while the Latins, on their part, affirmed that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son. In a council held in France in 776, at which the ambassadors of the emperor assisted, the controversy was examined and agitated; and the conduct of the Spanish and Gallic clergy, who had interpolated the word *filioque* into the creed of Constantinople, was severely arraigned. But the conference terminated in the usual mode. Each party continued inflexibly attached to the opinions they had embraced, and no alteration was obtained on either side.

Many additional causes occurred, to increase the mutual dislike of the contending patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople: nor was either party averse to any opportunity of exhibiting their respective pretensions and reciprocal antipathy. Either convinced by the arguments, or obedient to the commands, of their sovereign, the bishops of Constantinople had steadily opposed the decision  
of



of the Roman see, respecting the worship of images; their power and riches had been extended by the measures taken by the emperor, to humble the haughty successors of St. Peter; and the question respecting the procession of the Holy Spirit was a new source of rancour and contention between those rival brethren. Instances of the most flagitious conduct are to be found in the characters of these respective bishops. Anastasius, the Byzantine patriarch, who, upon the deposition of Germanus, and the manifestation of his attachment to the opinions of the Iconoclasts, had been raised to the vacant see, had the audacious villainy in the ensuing reign, in order to support the claims of an usurper to the throne, to calumniate the emperor as a believer in the simple humanity of Christ, and to confirm his testimony by swearing on the wood of the cross which he held in his hand. This atrocious conduct was resented by the emperor; he ordered the prelate to be publicly scourged, and to be carried through the city, mounted upon an ass, with his face to the tail; but he added not to his ignominy the deserved mortification of a deprivation from the see\*. The conduct of Zachary, in relation to Pepin's claim to the kingdom of France, was scarcely less atrocious than that of Anastasius. Indeed, whatever vices have disgraced the annals of mankind are to be found amongst these degenerate and corrupted ecclesiastics. Com-

\* Theoph. ad Ann. Const. i.



pulsion and artifice were continually employed to procure possession of the see of Rome. In 767, Constantine, of a noble family, obtained possession of the papacy ; and, after his accession to the pontificate, was ordained sub-deacon, deacon, and bishop, in order to enable him to retain the seat he had usurped. Great commotions were the consequence of this attempt ; an armed force from the king of the Lombards subdued Constantine, and compelled him to retire ; and he received afterwards, from his successor, the reward of his violence, by a cruel and premature death.

The name of Charlemagne, whose ambition and policy so considerably augmented the revenues of the church, makes a conspicuous figure in the annals of ecclesiastical history. Nor were these accessions the only advantages derived to the Christian world from the zeal of this monarch. No less from the political motive of subduing them under his power, than from the desire of propagating religion, he abolished the idolatrous worship of the Saxons, destroyed the temples of their gods, and, more indeed by compulsion than by argument, induced them to a nominal profession of Christianity.

His aversion to superstition was ardent and sincere, though it was sometimes sacrificed to motives of policy ; and his veneration for the sacred writings was unaffected. Every encouragement was extended by him for the promotion of literature,  
and

and of that branch in particular which relates to the illustration of Scripture. In his Capitularies he imposed several salutary restraints on the monastic orders; he reformed the ritual of the Latin church, and ordered it to be received in all the churches of his dominions. That his attempts to restore the knowledge of true religion, and to animate his subjects to the vigorous exertions of genius, should not be successful, will not excite our astonishment, if we consider the state of society at that period. It is greatly to his honour to have made the attempt, and by apparently the most judicious means. Schools contiguous to the principal churches and monasteries were erected by his command, for the instruction of youth in religion and learning. Every encouragement was offered, both by the example and munificence of the emperor, to the exertions of genius; and no measure was left untried to civilize the savage manners of the age, to restore Christianity, and to revive the decayed interests of literature.

## CHAP. II.

## OF GOVERNMENT, DOCTRINE, RITES, AND CEREMONIES IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY.

*Nature and Limits of the Papal Authority—National Councils—Increase of Monkery—Rites and Customs of Paganism transferred to Christianity—Reverence paid to the Bishop of Rome—Military Bishops—Images and Donations—New Rites of Communion—Rites respecting the Tonsure of Children—Marriage—Discovery of a curious Relic.*

FROM the review of the councils held during the eighth century, one might, on a cursory view, be tempted to conceive that the remedies applied to the increasing evils had been efficacious, and that additional restraints were altogether unnecessary. Corruption and profligacy, however, had so far invaded all ranks of society, that few were either qualified or disposed to stem the torrent of iniquity and folly. The eastern emperors, and the clergy of the whole Christian world, were occupied by the contest concerning images. In France, Charles Martel applied the revenues of the church to the support of the state; and Spain, oppressed by the victorious arms of the Saracens, was not in a condition to offer her assistance. Some canons, for the better regulation of the church, and the reformation of the clergy,

were

were made in the great council of Nice, and in the lesser councils of Italy, France, and England. These assemblies were all under the supreme dominion of the emperors or kings. The eastern potentates, as long as they retained their Italian dominions, regularly confirmed the election of the Roman pontiff; they assumed the right not only of interfering, but of deciding, in controversies of a merely religious nature, which was a privilege unclaimed by the emperor of the west. The power of the Roman bishop was still however confined within prescribed limits. He could determine nothing material by his sole authority; the bishops of provinces under his jurisdiction frequently voted in direct opposition to him. The emperor claimed the sole right of convening and presiding in councils; he occasionally inspected all the affairs of the church, and enacted regulations respecting the morals and conduct of the clergy; and from the monasteries and churches he derived a revenue proportioned to their possessions.

Under the Gothic princes of Spain, the national councils were composed of the bishops and the principal abbots, who, while they agitated the important questions of ecclesiastical discipline and doctrine, excluded the laity from their debates. This business concluded, the great men of the kingdom were admitted into their assemblies, and their decrees were ratified by the consent of the people.

Under the dominion of the kings of the second race in France, and in some parts of England, practices somewhat similar prevailed. The nobles took their place in the assembly along with the clergy; civil as well as ecclesiastical business engaged the attention of the assembly; the bishops composed articles for the internal polity of the church, and the nobles for the prosperity of the state, which were ratified by the sovereign, and obtained the names of chapters or capitularies.

Accessions of power and opulence were not confined to the rapacious see of Rome, but immense riches flowed in various channels into the treasuries of the monasteries and of the churches. A number of convents were founded, and richly endowed; and the revenues of the secular clergy were augmented by the superstitious opinion, that the punishments annexed by God to the commission of sin were to be averted by liberal donations to the church. This opinion, which during succeeding ages drew continual supplies of wealth into the ecclesiastical coffers, afforded in this century a pretext for the liberality of princes to the church. Provinces, cities, and fortresses were added to its possessions; and the monks and superior clergy were invested with the appendages and prerogatives of sovereign princes.

In the granting of these investitures we must, however, look beyond the avowed motive. Policy was thought to require the attachment of a  
body



body of men, whose influence was acknowledged by all; whose sacred characters, and spiritual powers, were found of the utmost efficacy in restraining the rebellious and turbulent spirit of the nobles; and whose gratitude and services might be secured by ample and liberal donations. The influence of the clergy was indeed rendered enormous, by the authority which was attributed to their censures. The thunders of excommunication rolled over the head of the impious offender against the authority of the church; and all ranks and degrees trembled at the execution of a sentence, which deprived them not only of their privileges as citizens, but of their rights as men. The powers of the Romish church, in particular, were extended by the success of the missionaries of Germany, who bent the necks of that fierce and barbarous people to their spiritual yoke. The hereditary prejudices of the barbarians were indeed a fruitful source of the power acquired by the Roman see; and it is to their influence we must ascribe the superior advantages obtained by the western clergy over their brethren of the east: The priests of paganism had obtained an entire ascendancy over the minds of an ignorant and superstitious people; every civil and military transaction was regulated by their councils and authority; and even the domestic transactions of these barbarians were directed by the advice of the ministers of religion. By a very natural and easy

transition, the powers which had been enjoyed by the pagan priesthood were acknowledged in the ministers of Christ; the haughty barbarians, who had spurned at and subverted the civil authority, fell prostrate at the feet of either their vanquished or conquering enemies, who were dignified with the episcopal character; and, on the other hand, it must be confessed, that the Romish clergy were not at all averse to receiving every advantage which might be derived from the superstition and ignorance of this people. They readily accepted the honours paid them by the barbarous nations; and the Roman bishop founded his claim as successor to the sovereign pontiff, and to the high priest of the Druids, upon pretended authorities drawn from the sacred oracles of God. The reverence with which the bishops of the Roman see were occasionally addressed, exceeded the measure of adulation commonly paid even to royalty. The custom of kissing the feet of the pope, upon his accession to the papacy, was quite established in the eighth century, though for some succeeding ages it was practised upon that occasion only. This custom was derived, in common with various other honours, from the sovereign pontiff, to whose privileges the bishop of Rome had succeeded. It had been introduced by the emperor and pontiff Caligula; probably in part to obtain one mark of adoration which had never been paid to his predecessors; and partly through the absurd vanity of exhibiting

exhibiting his magnificent slipper of gold, enriched with precious stones.

The introduction of the clergy into military offices was a circumstance not very favourable to their piety or virtue. John, the deacon of the great church at Constantinople, was created admiral of the imperial fleet against the Saracens; and lost his life in a mutiny, the effect of his imprudent severity against the refractory mariners. The troops of Naples were commanded by a sub-deacon; and the different functions of bishop and soldier were executed by Gevilieb, bishop of Mentz. This exemplary churchman directed a challenge in the most violent terms to another warlike bishop, whom he accused of killing his father; nor was the death of his antagonist considered as the smallest impediment to the discharge of his sacred function.

In the second council of Nice regulations were adopted for preventing in some degree the increasing ignorance of the clergy, by the canon which commanded an examination of the candidate for a bishopric, by interrogating him concerning his acquaintance with the liturgy, the gospels, and epistles, and the decrees of councils; and some restraint was put upon their private avarice, by a prohibition to the bishops or abbots to dispose of the goods of their churches or monasteries.

Ignorance is the true and genuine parent of vice; and in an age so unfavourable to knowledge  
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and virtue, we must not expect to find even the clergy exempt from that depravity which contaminated all classes of society. Luxury pervaded the sacerdotal order; and the flagitious conduct\* of the priests and monks called for repeated restrictions. In the council of Frankfort, abbots were prohibited from inflicting severe punishments on the offending monks; and from the shocking cruelty of putting out the eyes, or cutting off the limbs, of their inferior brethren, whatever might be their offence. The reformation of the clergy, from the deplorable errors and misconduct by which they were disgraced, was an object with several of the bishops, who were shocked at the licentiousness and vice of some of that order. For this purpose, Chrodegandus, bishop of Metz, established the institution of canons, or ecclesiastics, who, without adopting the monastic habits or method of life, should dwell together, and eat at one common table; and should assemble at appointed hours for the celebration of divine service. This order was intended to prevent the vices of the clergy, by removing them from mean and temporal pursuits; they were, however, distinguished from the monks, by not being confined, in the performance of their ecclesiastical functions, to the walls of

\* In this century, some monks pretended that the angel Gabriel had brought 12 articles from heaven, one of which was, that priests must not marry. *Bibl. Univers.* xii. 376. A 13th should have been added, says Jortin, that they might have concubines.



their monasteries, but were allowed to discharge the clerical duties in different churches committed to their care. The western nations adopted this new order with celerity : and numerous monasteries were erected for this purpose in Italy, Germany, and France. The worship of images, and the efficacy of donations to the church for the remission of sins, were the reigning tenets of the present age. They had been inculcated at a previous period, and had been increasing for some time in their extent and reputation. False as the foundations for these opinions were, they were not further removed from truth than many other doctrines which disgrace and disfigure the annals of this century. Religion was intermixed with absurdity, and truth and falsehood so blended, that it required more than common abilities to separate the useful and excellent from the mass of error.

In the course of the preceding pages, several instances of attempts to regulate and improve the discipline and ceremonies of the church have been occasionally noticed. In the administration of the Lord's Supper new rites were introduced, and new regulations took place. A superstitious regard for the elements had lessened the number of communicants in this peculiarly Christian ordinance ; but the oblations were too important to suffer the clergy quietly to acquiesce in this defection. They contrived therefore a means for continuing these, but without improving in any degree the sentiments  
of



of the people, whom they persuaded that, provided they continued the oblations, the service would still be useful to them. Instead of a real communion with bread and wine, they were therefore presented with a substitute of a much less awful nature, bread over which solemn prayer had been made, and to which they gave the name of *hallowed bread*.

Those who, after partaking of the regenerating waters of baptism, had relapsed into sin, were persuaded that they might regain the purity they had forfeited by their iniquities, by the assumption of the monastic habit, which contained all the virtues of a second baptism. In consequence of this belief, and the increasing veneration for monastic institutions, several monarchs assumed the habits of monks; and, in the short period of little more than two centuries, thirty English kings or queens resigned the splendours of royalty for the retirement of a cloister. The superstitious and indolent Christian committed the welfare of his own soul, and that of his departed friends, to the care of an avaricious monk or priest, who performed, or who affected to perform, in private, those prayers which were to relieve the sufferings of souls detained in purgatory, and to ensure other blessings to his liberal employer. During the long dominion of heathenism, superstition had entirely exhausted her talents for invention; so that, when the same spirit pervaded Christianity, its professors were necessarily

family compelled to adopt the practices of their predecessors, and to imitate their idolatry.

Amongst the other superstitious observances derived from this source, were the ceremonies made use of in cutting the hair of children. It had been usual not to cut the hair of a child till it had attained a certain age; and the person to whom the hair was sent was considered as acquiring, by that means, a near degree of relationship to the child. The pagans usually appropriated the first cuttings of the hair of their infants as an offering to some of their divinities. This pagan rite was, with numberless others, adopted by the Christians; and the *Ordo Romanus* contains several prayers which were anciently repeated upon that occasion, and are called *Orationes ad tonsurandum puerum*. It has already been observed that marriages were solemnized by the clergy, at a very early period, in the Christian world. The imperial laws declared, however, the legality of those matrimonial contracts which were not solemnized by the benediction of the clergy; and, from various reasons, the primitive mode of marrying was considerably neglected. Some of the zealous emperors, who were disposed to reform the abuses which had been practised in the church, considered this as a culpable deviation from the primitive mode. In the year 780 it was enacted by Charlemagne, that no marriage should be celebrated in any other way than by a benediction, with sacerdotal prayers and oblations.

oblations. About the year 900, Leo the philosopher, the eastern emperor, revived the same practice in the churches within his jurisdiction, which has continued ever since that period.

One of the most important of the relics which were discovered in the course of this century was the head of the celebrated champion and martyr St. George, who combated and destroyed the dragon. The Greek inscription on the shrine, in which the venerable skull was inclosed, left no room to doubt of its authenticity; and Zachary, the Roman pontiff, transported with joy at the discovery of a treasure so inestimable, accompanied by the assembled clergy and people of Rome, translated it with great pomp and solemnity to the church of St. George, where the stupendous miracles which it daily performed continued long to attract the veneration of the whole city\*. With the rage of collecting relics, that of pilgrimages, and of every absurd observance which could assume the name of religion, increased in their reputation. Superstition, inculcated by the clergy, was eagerly received by the unlettered multitude. To enumerate further instances, would be only to disgust the reader by an extended detail of the weakness and credulity of his species. It is indeed impossible to peruse the records of mankind, without painfully reflecting on the general tendency to depravity; and without lamenting the ravages of injustice, or the triumphs of absurdity.

\* Bower's Hist. of the Popes, iii. 341.

## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE  
EIGHTH CENTURY.

*Albanenses—Ethnophrones—Opinions concerning the Nature  
of Jesus Christ.*

THE great controversy respecting images so fully occupied the attention of the Christian world, as to afford little leisure, whatever might have been their inclination, to attend to many other speculations. The sectaries of this period were even fewer than those of the preceding century, and continued but for a short time to interrupt the unity of the Church.

The Albanenses, who derived their appellation from the residence of their founder, are said to have revived the Gnostic and Manichean doctrines of two principles. They denied not only the divinity, but even the humanity, of Jesus Christ; and asserted that he neither suffered, rose from the grave, nor ascended into heaven. This sect entirely rejected the doctrine of the resurrection; affirmed that the general judgment was already accomplished, that the torments of the damned consisted only in the evils of the present state, that  
free

free will was not given to man, and that there was no such thing as original sin. To these tenets they added the practice of administering baptism only to adults; and affirmed further the unlawfulness of oaths, and that a man can impart to himself a portion of the Holy Spirit.

The Ethnophrones (*Paganizers*) professed Christianity, but at the same time associated every practice of the heathen world with the profession of opinions diametrically opposite to them. In conformity to this absurd system, they practised judicial astrology, every species of divination, and carefully observed all the feasts and ceremonies of paganism.

Towards the close of this century some opinions were propagated in Spain, which occasioned considerable disturbance. Felix, bishop of Urgel in Catalonia, was consulted by Elipand, the archbishop of Toledo, concerning the sense in which Jesus Christ was to be called the Son of God; and whether, as a man, he ought to be considered as the adopted or natural Son of the Father. The reply given by Felix was acceptable to the archbishop—That Jesus Christ, according to his human nature, could only be considered as the Son of God by adoption, and a nominal son. This decision, which was propagated by the two Spanish prelates, was extremely offensive to the greater part of the church. The censures of several councils induced the timid Felix to make a retraction



tractation of his opinions, which however he never sincerely abjured, but closed his life with a firm conviction of their truth. The dominion of the Saracens proved more favourable to Elipand, who with impunity enjoyed under their jurisdiction the profession of his religious sentiments.

## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
EIGHTH CENTURY.

*Universal Ignorance—John Damascenus—Theodulphus—  
Bartholomew—Etherius—Paulinus—Expositors of Scrip-  
ture—Alcuin—Ambrose Authert—Homilies—Paul the  
Deacon—The Venerable Bede—Byzantine Historians—Ex-  
cellence of the British Fathers and Missionaries—Boniface  
—Vigilius, &c.*

**P**ERSECUTED, and almost expelled, by the tumults and desolations of the eastern empire, annoyed by the factions and contentions of the west, in every part opposed by increasing superstition and ignorance, the only refuge which was left for oppressed science was in the retreats of monasteries, whence she seldom dawned upon a benighted world. Even the controversies, which agitated the passions, and darkened the understandings of the Christians of this period, were discussed in writing by few, if their compositions are compared with the bulky volumes of preceding ages. Those of the Greeks, who were engaged in the great controversy concerning images, obscured and weakened their arguments by logical subtleties: nor were the Latins more successful in the dispute

concerning the person of Christ. The veneration for images was strenuously supported; and the sectaries in general were vigorously attacked by John Damascenus, the most distinguished Greek author of this century, who withdrew from the secular and honourable station of counsellor of state, to the retirement of a cloister; and whose adoption of the Aristotelian subtleties, and elucidation of the doctrines of its great master, considerably increased the reputation of that philosophy. Under the title of Four Books concerning the Orthodox Faith, John Damascenus exhibited a complete summary of the doctrines of the church, which obtained the highest reputation among the Greeks. The doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son was insisted upon by Theodulphus bishop of Orleans, who farther distinguished himself as the author of a Treatise upon Baptism, and several poems. A refutation of the Koran was written by Bartholomew, a monk of Edeffa in Syria; and the errors of Felix of Urgil, and of the archbishop Elipand, were attacked by Etherius a Spanish priest, and by Paulinus bishop of Aquileia.

Amongst the expositors of the sacred writings, we shall discover few marks of genius or originality. The prevalent opinions, concerning the faithfulness and excellence of the ancient commentators, were unfavourable to the exertions of reason and criticism; since the divines of this age, in consequence

of this sentiment, conceived they perfectly fulfilled their duty in retailing the observations made by their predecessors. The erudition and ingenuity of John Damascenus were not sufficient to elevate him above this prejudice ; he satisfied himself with exhibiting a commentary on St. Paul's Epistles, extracted from the works of Chrysostom. The encouragement afforded by Charlemagne to the elucidation of the sacred writings, was not so favourable to them as it might have been, had not the ignorance of the age induced both the monarch and his expositors to fanciful and useless inferences, rather than to solid and practical illustrations. Our countryman, who is styled by way of eminence the Venerable Bede, is amongst the most celebrated expositors of scripture in this century. Alcuin also, an Englishman, the preceptor and friend of Charlemagne, wrote a commentary on St. John ; and Ambrose Authert, who attempted an Explanation of the Revelations, obtained a distinguished rank amongst the sacred critics of this period. Homilies upon the Epistles and Gospels were compiled by the command of Charlemagne, which the priests were required to commit to memory, and to recite to the people. Alcuin, and Paul the deacon, had the principal share in these performances : others, however, produced similar compilations, the taste for which greatly increased towards the conclusion of this century.

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The moral writers of this period are few in number, and very defective in excellence. Virtue was indeed recommended by the powerful arguments of example; but it was the example of preceding ages, the piety and morality of departed saints, which was exhibited as a model to their descendants. It must indeed be confessed, that their actions were sometimes rather the result of fanaticism than of piety; and their example, in some respects, much more calculated to incite men to absurdity than to real excellence. Paul the Deacon, in his *History of the Lombards*, must be distinguished in a rank superior to the historians and biographers of the saints. Nor must the labours of Bede be forgotten: both civil and ecclesiastical affairs occupied his time and attention; and the venerable abbot of Farrow has given to the world an *Ecclesiastical History*, which, though in some respects chargeable with great credulity, is esteemed a faithful account of the transactions which took place during the period in which he wrote. The chronology of Bede is regulated by the Hebrew Bible; and he is distinguished as the first writer who rejected the chronology of the Septuagint. The authors of the *Byzantine Histories*, George Syncella and Theophanès, are deserving of attention.

If in this season of ignorance science might be said to exist, her principal residence must be certainly placed in Great Britain or Ireland. The preceptor of Charlemagne was a Briton; and his



court derived its most distinguished literary ornaments from this source. Their superior desire for the promotion of knowledge was proportioned to their superior attainments ; and France, Italy, and Germany bear witness to their accomplishments, and to their zeal in the cultivation of *scholastic theology*. Many British missionaries, fraught with religious knowledge, and influenced by a pious desire of imparting to their pagan neighbours the advantages they possessed, despising the difficulties of their way, and the dangers which awaited their arrival, crossed the ocean, and penetrated into the gloomy recesses of the German forests, for the instruction of that fierce and uncivilized people.

One of the most eminent missionaries of the eighth century was Wilfrid, a Benedictine monk, who was descended from an illustrious British family, and whose vigorous and successful labours entitled him to the appellation of the Apostle of the Germans. That Wilfrid endeavoured to accomplish the object of his mission by violence and stratagem ; that he consulted the canons of the Romish church, rather than the dictates of the gospel ; and that he was more solicitous to advance the interests of the papacy than the knowledge of true religion, cannot be denied. The German apostle was subtle, insinuating, and haughty ; but his contempt of danger, his zeal, and his abilities, have justly entitled him to the notice of posterity. Repulsed in his first attempt

tempt to influence the minds of that furious and ignorant people, he redoubled his efforts to propagate the faith. With unwearied zeal, and persevering diligence, he addressed his arguments both to the reason and to the passions of his auditors. His zeal for the authority of the pope (whose supremacy was by his means afterwards first acknowledged in a council convened by his archiepiscopal authority at Mentz) was honoured by the highest approbation of the Roman pontiff, who consecrated him a bishop, and gave him the name of Boniface : he was distinguished also by the patronage and assistance of Charles Martel. Monasteries and churches were erected, by the assiduity of Boniface and his pious associates, on the ruins of the heathen temples, and consecrated groves of paganism. In the course of his ministerial labours he was engaged in a warm dispute with his disciple Vigilus upon the validity of baptism, which had been performed by a priest, who, ignorant of the Latin language (which Boniface had introduced into the ritual of the German church), had made a small mistake in the words of that ordinance. The Roman pontiff espoused the cause of the validity, and of Vigilus ; and Boniface was determined upon revenge. This he effected by attacking the opinions of his disciple, who had heretically asserted the globular figure of the earth, and the existence of antipodes. The apostle, who, unlike his predecessor, was far from being

possessed of *all knowledge*, could not comprehend this new system; and concluded, that Vigilus, by his strange assertions, could only mean that a world existed under this, inhabited by other men, and illuminated by other planets. In consequence of this idea, he accused Vigilus of the heresy of asserting a plurality of worlds; and Zachary the pontiff, who conceived the proposition equivalent to a declaration that all men were not descended from Adam, nor involved in his guilt, and consequently that Christ had not died for all, was extremely alarmed at a doctrine which he regarded as totally repugnant to scripture; he therefore ordered Boniface to convene a council, in which if the heretic refused to abjure his errors, he was to be degraded and lopped off, as a rotten member, from the body of the faithful. The event of these inquiries is uncertain; but as Vigilus was afterwards preferred to the see of Saltzburgh, and is honoured as a saint, it is probable that he exculpated himself from the suspicion of heresy\*. Favoured by princes and by popes, Boniface, in addition to the archiepiscopal see of Mentz, received the further honour of being created primate of Belgium and Germany. A tranquil death was not however the termination of a life devoted to the most active, though frequently injudicious, exertions in the cause of Christianity. After

\* Bower's Hist. of the Popes, iii. 338.

forty years spent in his laborious mission, the apostle of Germany, with fifty ecclesiastics his companions and friends, were, on their return into Friesland, inhumanly murdered by the inhabitants of that barbarous country. Besides his Lives of the Saints, Boniface composed some Sermons and Letters.

## THE NINTH CENTURY.

## CHAP. I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
CENTURY.

*Conversion of Jutland—of Part of Sweden—of Slavonia—of Russia—Mr. Gibbon's Sentiments concerning these Conversions—Saracens conquer Sicily, &c.—Inursions of Northern Barbarians—State of the Church and Clergy—Injudicious Distribution of Preferments—Manner of electing Popes—Pope Joan—Donations of Lewis the Meek—Diffensions in the Carolingian Family—Increase of the Papal Power from this and other Circumstances—Forgery of the Decretals, &c.—Increase of Monks—Revival of the Iconoclastic Controversy—Council at Constantinople—Progress of Image-Worship in the West—Final Schism between the Greek and Latin Churches.*

THE spirit of Christianity is but little consistent with the warlike spirit of the ninth century; however, therefore, we may commend the intentions of the illustrious son of Pepin, the means which he employed cannot meet our approbation.



bation. A large portion of his life was dedicated to the glorious purpose of establishing the religion of Jesus among the Huns, the Saxons, Friesland, and other unenlightened nations: but his piety was blended with violence, and his spiritual conquests were generally achieved by the force of arms. His son Lewis, undeservedly surnamed the Meek, inherited the defects of his father without his virtues; and was his equal in violence and cruelty, but greatly his inferior in all valuable accomplishments. Under his reign a very favourable opportunity was offered of propagating the gospel among the northern nations, and particularly among the inhabitants of Sweden and Denmark. A petty king of Jutland, named Harald Klack, being expelled from both his kingdom and country in the year 826 by Regner Lodbrock, threw himself at the emperor's feet, and implored his succour against the usurper. Lewis granted his request; and promised the exiled prince his protection and assistance, on condition that he would embrace Christianity, and admit the ministers of that religion to preach in his dominions. Harald submitted to these conditions; was baptized with his brother at Mentz, in 826; and returned into his country attended by two eminent divines, Ansgar or Anschaire, and Authbert, the former a monk of Corbey in Westphalia, and the latter belonging to a monastery of the same name in France. These venerable missionaries preached the

the gospel with remarkable success, during the space of two years, to the inhabitants of Cimbria and Jutland.

After the death of his learned and pious companion Authbert, the zealous and indefatigable Ansgar made a voyage into Sweden, in 828, where his ministerial labours were crowned with distinguished success. On his return into Germany, in 831, he was decorated by Lewis the Meek with ecclesiastical honours; he was created archbishop of the new church at Hamburgh, and of the whole north, to which dignity the superintendence of the church of Bremen was afterwards annexed in the year 844\*.

Under the reign of Basilus the Macedonian, who ascended the imperial throne of the Greeks in the year 867, the Slavonians, Arentani, and certain provinces of Dalmatia, dispatched a solemn embassy to Constantinople, to declare their resolution of conforming to the ecclesiastical forms and civil jurisdiction of the Greeks. This proposal was received with admiration and joy; and was answered by a suitable ardour and zeal for the conversion of a people which seemed so ingenuously disposed to embrace the truth: a competent number of Grecian divines was accordingly deputed to instruct them in the knowledge of the gospel, and to admit them by baptism into the Christian church†. The warlike nation of the Russians,

\* Mosheim.

† Id.

having

having entered into a treaty of peace with Basilus, were engaged, by various presents and promises, to profess the truths of Christianity ; in consequence of which, they not only received the ministers who were appointed to instruct them, but an archbishop, whom the Grecian patriarch Ignatius had sent among them, to perfect their conversion and establish their church \*.

Such was the commencement of Christianity among the Russians, who were inhabitants of the Ukraine ; and who, a short time before their conversion, fitted out a formidable fleet, and, setting sail from Kiovia for Constantinople, spread terror and dismay throughout the whole empire.

“ Truth and candour,” says an author † by no means too favourably disposed to Christianity, “ must acknowledge, that the conversion of the North imparted many temporal benefits both to the old and new Christians. The rage of war, inherent to the human species, could not be healed by the evangelic precepts of charity and peace ; and the ambition of catholic princes has renewed in every age the calamities of hostile contention. But the admission of the barbarians into the pale of civil and ecclesiastical society delivered Europe from the depredations, by sea and land, of the Normans, the Hungarians, and the Russians, who learned to spare their brethren, and cultivate their

\* Constantinus Porph. Vita Basilii Macedonis, l. 96. p. 157.

† Mr. Gibbon.

possessions. The establishment of law and order was promoted by the influence of the clergy ; and the rudiments of art and science were introduced into the savage countries of the globe. The liberal piety of the Russian princes engaged in their service the most skilful of the Greeks, to decorate the cities, and instruct the inhabitants : the dome and the paintings of St. Sophia were rudely copied in the churches of Kiow and Novogorod ; the writings of the fathers were translated into the Slavonic idiom ; and three hundred noble youths were invited or compelled to attend the lessons of the college of Jaroslaus.”

The Saracens had extended their usurpations with amazing success. Lords of Asia, a few provinces excepted, their conquests reached to the extremities of India, and the greater part of Africa. Ever disposed to enterprise, and allured by the fertility of the opposite shores, they willingly listened to the invitation of Count Julian, who, displeased with his sovereign, offered to introduce the Saracens into the heart of Spain ; and this country, which during two hundred years resisted the arms of Rome, was in a few months subdued by the followers of Mahomet. Crete, Sardinia and Corfica were added to their conquests, and in 827 Sicily submitted to the faith and jurisdiction of her Arabian conquerors. These conquests were the precursors of an attempt upon Rome : the barbarians penetrated to the walls of the city, and their divisions

sions \* alone preserved from subjugation the ancient mistress of the west. The distress of the Romans was increased by the death of their pontiff Sergius II. In his successor they however found a chief fitted for the employments both of the cabinet and the field ; and under Leo IV. the Saracens were repulsed from the shores of the Tyber. It may be easily conceived that the unprecedented prosperity of a nation accustomed to bloodshed and rapine, and which beheld the Christians with the utmost aversion, must have been extremely injurious to the progress of the gospel, and to the tranquillity of the church. In the east, a prodigious number of Christian families embraced the religion of their conquerors, that they might be suffered to continue in the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions. Many indeed refused a compliance so criminal, and with pious magnanimity adhered to their principles in the face of persecution : such were however gradually reduced to extreme misery, and not only despoiled of their possessions and advantages, but in time were so entirely debased by the yoke of oppression, as to sink by degrees into the grossest ignorance, and to lose every vestige of Christianity except the mere name, and a few external rites and ceremonies. The European Saracens, particularly those who were settled in Spain, were less intolerant, and seemed to have lost the greatest part of their native ferocity. It must however be confessed, that this mild

\* Gibbon, chap. 52.



and tolerating conduct of the Saracens was not without several exceptions of cruelty \*.

The European Christians experienced the most severe sufferings from the insatiable fury of the barbarous hordes which issued from the northern provinces. The Normans, under which general term are comprehended the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, whose habitations lay along the coasts of the Baltic sea, were a people accustomed to carnage and rapine. Their petty kings and chiefs, who subsisted by piracy and plunder, had, during the reign of Charlemagne, infested with their fleets the coasts of the German ocean; but were restrained by the opposition they met with from the vigilance and activity of that prince. In this century, however, they became more bold and enterprising; made frequent irruptions into Germany, Britain, Friesland, and Gaul; and carried along with them, wherever they went, fire and sword, desolation and horror. The impetuous fury of these barbarians not only spread desolation through the Spanish provinces, but even penetrated into the heart of Italy. In the year 857, they sacked and pillaged several cities of that region. The ancient records of the Franks abound with the most dismal accounts of their horrid exploits.

\* See, for example, the account which is given of Eulogius, who suffered martyrdom at Cordova, in the *Acta Sanctorum* ad d. xi. Martii, tom. ii. p. 88; as also of Roderic and Salomon, two Spanish martyrs of this century. *Ibid.* ad d. xiii. Martii, p. 238.

The first intention of these invaders extended only to plunder: but charmed at length with the beauty and fertility of the provinces which they were so cruelly depopulating, they began to form settlements in them. Too feeble, or too much occupied by other views, the European princes were not in a condition to oppose their usurpations: on the contrary, Charles the Bald was obliged, in the year 850, to resign a considerable part of his dominions to this powerful banditti; and a few years after, under the reign of Charles the Gross, emperor, and king of France, the famous Norman chief Godofred entered with an army into Friesland, and obstinately refused to sheath his sword before he was master of the whole province. Such however of the Normans as settled among the Christians, contracted a gentler turn of mind, and gradually departed from their primitive ferocity. Their marriages with the Christians contributed, no doubt, to their civilization, and engaged them to abandon the superstition of their ancestors with more facility, and to embrace the gospel with more readiness. Thus the haughty conqueror of Friesland was induced to profess the Christian religion, after he had received in marriage, from Charles the Gross, Gisela, the daughter of the younger Lothaire.

The licentiousness of the clergy increased at this period, and particularly in those parts where the people still retained any share in the elections. In

the east, tumult, discord, conspiracies, and treasons reigned uncontrouled, and all things were carried by violence. In the western provinces, the bishops and clergy were become extremely voluptuous and effeminate. The ignorance of the sacerdotal order was in many places so deplorable, that few of them could write or even read, and still fewer were capable of expressing their erroneous opinions in religion with any degree of method or perspicuity: hence it happened, that when any affair of consequence was to be committed to writing, they had commonly recourse to some person who was supposed to be endowed with superior abilities.

Many other circumstances concurred, particularly in the European nations, to produce and augment these evils. Among these we may account the calamities of the times, the sanguinary and perpetual wars which were carried on between Lewis the Meek and his family, the incursions and conquests of the barbarous nations, the gross and incredible ignorance of the nobility, and the affluence and riches that from every quarter flowed in upon the churches and religious seminaries. Nor were other motives wanted to dishonour the church, by introducing into it a corrupt ministry. A nobleman, who, from a deficiency of talents, activity, or courage, was rendered incapable of appearing with dignity in the cabinet, or with honour in the field, immediately directed his views towards the church, aimed at a distinguished place among its chiefs and rulers,

rulers, and became in consequence a contagious example of stupidity and vice to the inferior clergy. Those patrons of churches, who possessed the right of election, unwilling to submit their disorderly conduct to the keen censure of zealous and upright pastors, commonly committed to the most abject, ignorant, and worthless ecclesiastics the cure of souls \*. Besides all this, it frequently happened that princes, to satisfy the rapacity of their soldiers and domestics, boldly invaded the possessions of the church, which they distributed among their armies; and in consequence of this the priests and monks, in order to avoid perishing through hunger, abandoned themselves to the practice of violence, fraud, and every species of crime, which they considered as the only means that remained, of procuring themselves a subsistence.

\* Agobardus, *De Privilegiis et Jure Sacerdotum*, cap. xi. p. 341, tom. i.—Genius and virtue have a natural claim to the patronage and protection of all who fill the higher departments both in civil and ecclesiastical life, as they exercise those offices merely in trust for the public. But, if no such claim existed, good policy alone would dictate an attention to persons of ability. In seasons of difficulty these are the only supports which can be relied on; and as the strongest sentiments of gratitude are, it is to be hoped, inseparably connected with the other strong feelings of genius, the nation or the individual, who places a reliance on such characters, will seldom find their confidence abused. To the dispraise of great talents, it must also be confessed, that they are too frequently united with irritability of temper, and it is dangerous to provoke them by unmerited neglect.



The Roman pontiffs were raised to that high dignity by the suffrages of the sacerdotal order, accompanied by the voice of the people ; but after their election, the approbation of the emperor was necessary to their consecration. There is indeed yet extant, an edict supposed to have been published, in the year 817, by Lewis the Meek, in which he abolishes this imperial right, and grants to the Romans not only the power of electing their pontiff, but also the privilege of installing and consecrating him when elected, without waiting for the emperor's consent\*. But this grant will deceive none who examine the affair with any degree of attention and diligence, since several of the learned have proved it spurious by the most irresistible arguments†. It must however be confessed, that, after the time of Charles the Bald, a new scene was exhibited, and the important change above mentioned was really introduced. That prince having obtained the imperial dignity by the good offices of the bishop of Rome, returned this eminent service by exonerating the succeeding pontiffs from the obligation of waiting for the consent of the emperors, in order to their being installed in office. Thus from the time of Eugenius

\* Harduini Concilia, tom. iv. p. 1236. Le Cointe, *Annales Eccles. Francor.* tom. vii. ad An. 817. s. 6. Baluzii *Capitular. Regum Francor.* tom. i. p. 591.

† Muratori, *Droits de l'Empire sur l'Etat Ecclesiast.* p. 54; *Antiq. Ital. Medii Ævi*, tom. iii. p. 29, 30.



III. who was raised to the pontificate in 884, the election was carried on without the least regard to law, order, or even decency, and was generally attended with civil tumults and dissensions, until the reign of Otho the Great, who put a stop to these disorderly proceedings.

The principle of aggrandizing the Roman see, which had almost invariably governed the conduct of the popes, was not likely to be diminished at a period when they tasted the sweets of uncontrouled power. To render it the more permanent, they attempted to discard the authority of the king of France, from whom so large a portion of their temporal power was derived. Notwithstanding their increased dominion, the pontiffs of this century were however little distinguished by any eminent qualities; and to attempt to detail their history, would be to amuse the reader with a catalogue of names. Between the reigns of Leo IV. and Benedict III. a female pope has been introduced. This extraordinary or imaginary person is still characterized by the popular name of Pope Joan, but the papal title which is assigned to her is that of John VIII. She is reported to have been a native of Germany, and early to have conceived a strong attachment to literature and science. With a view of gratifying without restraint this favourite propensity, she is said to have assumed the habit of a man, and to have studied at Athens. From Athens she proceeded to Rome, where her eloquence, learn-

ing, and popular manners, commanded the admiration of all who heard her in the public disputations of the schools. By successive steps she ascended the papal throne in 854; but unfortunately she indulged in passions very inconsistent with the pursuits of literature, or the maintenance of her dignity. After a reign of two years five months and four days, the fruit of her indiscretions exposed her in a very improper situation in a public procession; her paramour is said to have been a cardinal, who officiated as her chaplain; and she expired in this very procession of the pains of labour in the street, between the theatre called Coliseum and the church of St. Clement. Such is the narrative which was believed for successive centuries, and with so little offence to the Catholics themselves, that her statue is said to have occupied a place among those of the popes, in the cathedral of Sienna \*. It is also supported by the testimony of Platina, who dedicated his history to Sixtus IV.; by that of Ranulphus, in his *Polychronicon*; by Martinus Polonus, afterwards archbishop of Cosenza; by Damafius, Pandulphus, Marianus Scotus, Sigibert abbot of Gemblours, archbishop Antoine, and is mentioned as a well known fact by both Petrarch and Boccacio. Notwithstanding these authorities, however, the fact has been questioned by some later critics; and their arguments on the subject are plausible at least. That

\* Pagi Crit. t. iii. p. 624—626.

a person of such abilities should expose herself to the danger of such an event as occasioned the discovery, is rather improbable; but it is still more improbable that the keen and ambitious Photius should neglect such an opportunity of exposing to ridicule the pretensions to infallibility which were maintained by a rival see. To all this it may be added, that very accurate chronologies, and even the testimony of a contemporary, Anastasius, indissolubly link the death of Leo and the elevation of Benedict, both which events are fixed by them to the year 857\*.

From the liberality of the Carlovingian race the see of Rome continued to derive substantial benefits; and though the pretended donations of Lewis the Meek are generally discredited, the circumstances of the family soon afforded a pretence for new usurpations. After the death of Lewis II. a fatal war broke out between the posterity of Charlemagne, among whom there were several

\* If the story was established as firmly as any other historical fact, it would in an enlightened age reflect no discredit on the Romish church. The vices of Joan were not so flagrant as those of John XIII. Alexander VI. and others. With respect to the disgrace of a female occupying the first station in the church, let it be remembered, that in the estimation of Pope Sixtus V. one of the greatest monarchs, that ever swayed a sceptre, was a female; or let any person endowed with a tolerable portion of reason and candour ask himself, whether the sovereignty of Rome would be in greater danger in the hands of the great female historian of England, or in those of the endless train of pedants and bigots, whose brows have so unworthily been decorated with the triple crown.

competitors for the empire. This furnished the Italian princes, and the Roman pontiff John VIII. with a favourable opportunity of assuming to themselves the right of nominating to the imperial throne, and of excluding from all part in this election the nations, who had formerly the right of suffrage; and, if the opportunity was favourable, it was seized with avidity, and improved with the utmost dexterity and zeal. Their favour and interest were earnestly solicited by Charles the Bald, whose entreaties were rendered effectual by rich presents, prodigious sums of money, and most pompous promises; in consequence of which he was proclaimed emperor in 876, by the pontiff John VIII. and by the Italian princes assembled at Pavia. Carloman, and Charles the Gross, who succeeded him in the kingdom of Italy and in the Roman empire, were also elected by the Roman pontiff and the Italian princes. After the reign of these princes, the empire was torn in pieces; the most deplorable tumults and commotions arose in Italy, France, and Germany, which were governed, or rather subdued and usurped, by various chiefs; and in this confused scene, the highest bidder was, by the assistance of the avaricious pontiffs, generally raised to the government of Italy, and to the imperial throne\*.

Thus the power and influence of the popes, in

\* This matter is amply illustrated by Sigonius, in his famous book *De Regno Italiæ*, and by the other writers of German and Italian history.



civil affairs, arose in a short time to an enormous height, through the favour and protection of the princes in whose cause they had employed the influence which superstition had given them over the minds of the people. The increase of their authority, in religious matters, was not less rapid, nor less considerable; and it arose from the same causes. The European princes suffered themselves to be divested of the supreme authority in religious affairs, which they had derived from Charlemagne; the power of the bishops was greatly diminished; and even the authority of both provincial and general councils began to decline. The Roman pontiffs, elated with this dangerous prosperity, were eagerly bent upon persuading all, and they had indeed the good fortune to persuade many, that the bishop of Rome was constituted and appointed by Jesus Christ supreme legislator and judge of the universal church; and that therefore the bishops derived all their authority from the Roman pontiff, nor could the councils determine any thing without his permission and consent\*.

In order to gain credit to this new ecclesiastical system, so different from the ancient rules of church government, and to support the haughty pretensions of the pontiffs to supremacy and independence, it was necessary to have recourse to the authority of ancient deeds. Some of the most ingenious and zealous partisans of the court of Rome were therefore employed in forging conven-

\* Mosheim.



tions, acts of councils, epistles, and similar records, by which it might appear that, in the first ages of the church, the Roman pontiffs were clothed with the same spiritual majesty and supreme authority which they now assumed.

Among these fictitious supports of the papal dignity, the famous Decretal Epistles, as they are called, said to have been written by the pontiffs of the primitive times, deserve chiefly to be stigmatized. They were the productions \* of an obscure writer, who fraudulently prefixed to them the name of Isidore, bishop of Seville. Some of them had appeared in the eighth century ; but they were now entirely drawn from their obscurity, and produced, with an air of ostentation and triumph, to demonstrate the supremacy of the Roman pontiffs. The decisions of a certain Roman council, which is said to have been held during the pontificate of Silvester, were likewise alleged in behalf of the same cause : but this council had never been so much as heard of before the present century ; and the accounts now given of it proceeded from the same source with the Decretals, and were equally authentic.

The monastic life was now universally in the highest esteem ; and nothing could equal the veneration that was paid to such as devoted themselves to the sacred gloom and indolence of a con-

\* The celebrated donation of Constantine to the church is with much apparent probability referred to this period.

vent. The Greeks and orientals had been long accustomed to regard the monkish orders and discipline with the greatest admiration; but it was only since the beginning of the last century that this passion was indulged among the Latins to such an extravagant length. In the present age its boundaries were still further extended: kings, dukes, and counts forgot their true dignity, even the fulfilling with zeal the duties of their high stations; and affected that contempt of the world and its grandeur, which they mistook for magnanimity and real devotion\*.

After the banishment of Irene, the controversy concerning images was renewed among the Greeks; and was carried on by the contending parties, during the half of this century, with various and uncertain success. The emperor Nicephorus, though he did not abrogate the decrees of the council of Nice, nor order the images to be taken out of the churches, yet deprived the patrons of image-worship of all power to molest or injure their adversaries, and seems upon the whole to have been an enemy to that idolatrous service. But his successor Michael Curopalates, surnamed Rhangabe, pursued very different measures. Feeble and timorous, and dreading the rage of the

\* It appears that there were still remaining some Stylitæ, or pillar monks. This sublime order had therefore continued three hundred and fifty years from its first institution. Fleury, x.

priests and monks who maintained the cause of images, he favoured that cause during his short reign, and persecuted its adversaries with the greatest rancour and cruelty. The scene again changed upon the accession of Leo the Armenian to the empire, who abolished the decrees of the Nicene council, relating to the use and worship of images, in a council assembled at Constantinople in 814\*; without however enacting any penal laws against their idolatrous worshippers. This moderation, far from satisfying the patriarch Nicephorus, and the other partisans of image-worship, only served to encourage their obstinacy, and to increase their insolence; upon which the emperor removed the haughty prelate from his office, and chastised the fury of several of his adherents with a deserved punishment. His successor Michael, surnamed Balbus, or the Stammerer, was compelled to observe the same conduct, and to depart from the clemency and indulgence which in the beginning of his reign he had discovered towards the worshippers of images, whose idolatry however he was far from approving; the monks in particular excited his indignation by their fanatical rage, and forced him to treat them with particular severity†. But the zeal of his son and  
successor

\* Fleury, and some other writers, place the meeting of this council in the year 815.

† This emperor, writing to the emperor Lewis, gives him the following remarkable account of the idolaters: Many of  
our

successor Theophilus, in discouraging idolatry, was still more vehement; for he opposed the worshippers of images with great violence, and went so far as to condemn to death some of the more obstinate supporters of that impetuous faction. Upon the death of Theophilus, which happened in the year 842, the regency was entrusted with the empress Theodora, during her son's minority. This superstitious princess, fatigued with the importunate solicitations of the monks, deluded by their forged miracles, and not a little influenced by their insolent threats, assembled in the same year a council at Constantinople, in which the decrees of the second Nicene council were re-instated in their lost authority, and the Greeks were indulged in their corrupt propensity to image-worship, by a decisive law. Thus, after a controversy which had

our clergy and laity, departing from the apostolical traditions, have introduced pernicious novelties. They took down the crosses in the churches, and put the images in their room, before which they lighted up lamps, and burned incense, honouring them as the cross. They sang before them, worshipped them, and implored their succour. Many dressed the female images with robes, and made them stand godmothers to their children. They offered up hair to them, when they cut it off for the first time. Some presbyters scratched off the paint from the images, and mixed it with the holy eucharist, and gave it in the communion. Others put the body of the Lord into the hands of the images, and made the communicants take it out thence. Others used boards, with pictures painted on them, instead of an altar, on which they consecrated the elements; and many similar abuses they committed.

been



been protracted during the space of an hundred and ten years, the cause of idolatry triumphed over the dictates of reason and Christianity; the whole east, the Armenians excepted, bowed down before the victorious images; nor did any of the succeeding emperors attempt to recover the Greeks from this superstitious frenzy, or to restrain them in the performance of this puerile worship. The council which was held at Constantinople under Photius, in the year 879, and which is reckoned by the Greeks the eighth general council, added force and vigour to idolatry, by maintaining the sanctity of images, and approving, confirming, and renewing the Nicene decrees. The same council expunged the word *filioque* from the creed.

The triumph of images, notwithstanding the zealous efforts of Roman pontiffs in their favour, was obtained with much more difficulty among the Latins than it had been among the Greeks: for the former still continued to maintain that invaluable, and indeed inalienable, privilege of judging for themselves in religious matters; and were far from being disposed to submit their reason implicitly to the decisions of the pontiff, or to consider any thing as infallible and true which had human authority only for its foundation. Most of the European Christians steered a middle course between the idolaters and the iconoclasts; between those who were zealous for the worship of images on the one hand, and those who were totally averse



to the use of them on the other. They were of opinion, as was already stated, that images might be suffered as the means of aiding the memory of the faithful, and of calling to their remembrance the pious and virtuous actions of the persons they represented; but they detested all thoughts of paying them the smallest degree of religious homage or adoration. Michael Balbus, when he sent, in the year 824, a solemn embassy to Lewis the Meek, to renew and confirm the treaties of friendship and peace which had been concluded between his predecessors in the empire, and Charlemagne, charged his ministers, in a particular manner, to conciliate the king of the Franks \* to the party of the iconoclasts, that they might gradually suppress, by their united influence, the worship of images, and thus restore concord and tranquillity to the church. Lewis, upon this occasion, assembled a council at Paris in 824, to examine the proposal of the Grecian emperor; in which it was resolved to adhere to the decrees of the council of Frankfort, which allowed the use of images in the churches; but severely to prohibit treating them with the smallest marks of religious worship. In time, however, the European Christians departed gradually from the observance of this in-

\* So Michael and his son Theophilus style Lewis, in their letter to him, refusing him the title of emperor; to which, however, he had an undoubted right, in consequence of the treaties which they now desired to renew.

junction, and fell imperceptibly into a blind submission to the decisions of the Roman pontiff, whose influence and authority grew daily more formidable. Towards the conclusion therefore of this century, the Gallican clergy began to pay a certain degree of religious homage to the sacred images; and their example was followed by the Germans, and other nations\*.

Notwithstanding this apostasy, the Iconoclasts were not destitute of adherents among the Latins. The most eminent of these was Claudius, bishop of Turin, by birth a Spaniard, and a disciple of Felix bishop of Urgel. This zealous prelate no sooner obtained the episcopal dignity through the favour of Lewis the Meek, than he began the duties of his function in the year 823, by ordering all images, and even the cross itself, to be cast out of the churches, and committed to the flames. The year following he composed a treatise, in which he not only defended these vehement proceedings, and declared against the use, as well as the worship, of images; but also broached several other opinions that were contrary to the notions of the multitude, and to the prejudices of the times. He denied, among other things, in opposition to the Greeks, that the cross was to be honoured with any kind of worship; he treated

\* Mabillon, *Annal. Benedictin.* tom. ii, p. 488—Id. *Præf. ad Sæc. iv. Act. SS. Ord. Benedicti*, Sæc. iv. part i. p. 7, §.—Le Cointe, *Annal. Eccles. Francor.* tom. iv. ad h. a. 824.

relics with the utmost contempt, as absolutely destitute of the virtues which were attributed to them; and censured with much freedom and severity the frequent pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and the offerings at the tombs of saints, which produced such immense emoluments to considerable bodies of ecclesiastics. It is not to be supposed that such a stand in defence of liberty and common sense should pass without opposition. Theodomin bishop of Turin, Jonas bishop of Orleans, and some others, attempted to refute him in voluminous answers, and probably not without success in the apprehension of no small portion of their readers.

But of all the controversies which this age produced, the most interesting is that which ended in the total disunion of the Greek and Latin churches. A vindictive and jealous spirit of animosity and contention had for a long time prevailed between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, and had sometimes manifested itself in positive acts of violence. In this century it arose to an enormous height; and broke forth into a most violent flame in the year 858, when the learned Photius was chosen patriarch of Constantinople, by the emperor Michael, in the place of Ignatius, whom that prince expelled from his see, and forced into exile. This violent proceeding, though it was justified and applauded by a council assembled at Constantinople, in the year 861, was far from

being attended with general approbation. Ignatius appealed from this council to the Roman pontiff Nicholas I. who espoused his interests; and in a council assembled at Rome, in 862, excommunicated Photius, as unlawfully elected; as well as his abettors, for having been concerned in so unrighteous a cause. The new patriarch, however, was so far from being terrified or dejected by this excommunication, that he returned the compliment to the Roman pontiff; and in a council assembled at Constantinople, in the year 866, declared Nicholas unworthy both of the place he held in the church, and also of being admitted to the communion of Christians.

The Roman pontiff alleged a specious pretext for appearing in this contest with so much violence, and exciting such unhappy commotions in the church. This pretext was the innocence of Ignatius, whom, upon an accusation of treason, whether true or false, the emperor had degraded from his patriarchal dignity. This, however, was no more than a pretext: ambition and interest were the true though secret springs which directed the conduct of Nicholas, who would have borne with patience, and even have beheld with indifference, the unjust sufferings of Ignatius, could he but have recovered from the Greeks the provinces of Illyricum, Macedonia, Epirus, Achaia, Thessaly, and Sicily, which the emperor and Photius had removed from the jurisdiction of the  
Roman



Roman see. Before he engaged in the cause of Ignatius, he sent a solemn embassy to Constantinople, to demand the restitution of these provinces; but his demand was rejected with contempt: hence, under pretence of avenging the injuries committed against Ignatius, he indulged without restraint his own private resentment; and thus covered with the mask of justice the fury of disappointed ambition and avarice.

While affairs were in this distracted state, and the flame of controversy was daily becoming more violent, Basilus the Macedonian, who by the murder of his predecessor had enabled himself to seize the imperial throne, calmed at once these tumults, and restored peace to the church, by recalling Ignatius from exile to the high station from which he had been degraded, and by confining Photius in a monastery. This imperial act of authority was solemnly approved and confirmed by a council assembled at Constantinople in the year 869, in which the legates of the Roman pontiff Adrian II. had considerable influence, and were treated with the highest marks of distinction\*. The Latins acknowledge this assembly as the eighth œcumenical council; and in it the religious disputes between them and the Greeks were concluded, or silenced and suspended at least. But the controversy concerning the authority of the Roman pontiffs, the limits of their spiritual empire, and

\* The writers on both sides of this controversy are enumerated by Fabricius, in his *Bibl. Græca*, vol. iv. c. xxxviii. p. 372.



particularly their jurisdiction in Bulgaria, still subsisted; nor could all the efforts of papal ambition engage either Ignatius or the emperors to resign Bulgaria, or any other province, to the see of Rome.

Upon the death of Ignatius, which happened in the year 878, the emperor took Photius into favour, and placed him again at the head of the Greek church, in the patriarchal dignity whence he had fallen. This restoration of the degraded patriarch was agreed to by the Roman pontiff John VIII. upon condition, however, that Photius would permit the Bulgarians to come under the jurisdiction of the Roman see. The latter promised to satisfy in this the demands of the pontiff, to which the emperor also appeared to concede\*; hence it was that John VIII. sent legates to the council held at Constantinople in 879, by whom he declared his approbation of the acts of that assembly, and acknowledged Photius as his brother in Christ. The promises however of the emperor and the patriarch were far from being accomplished; for, after this council, the former, probably by the advice, or at least with the consent, of Photius, refused to transfer the province of Bulgaria to the Roman pontiff; and it must be confessed that this refusal was founded upon weighty and important reasons. The pontiff, notwithstanding, was highly irritated at this disappointment, and sent Marinus to Constantinople in the character

\* Mich. Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, tom. i. p. 103.

of legate, to declare that he had changed his mind concerning Photius, and that he entirely approved of the sentence of excommunication which had formerly been issued against him. The legate, upon delivering this disagreeable message, was cast into prison by the emperor, but was afterwards set free; and being raised to the pontificate upon the death of John VIII. recalled the remembrance of this injurious treatment, and levelled a new sentence of condemnation against Photius.

This sentence was treated with contempt by the haughty patriarch. But, about six years after this period, he experienced again the fragility of sublunary grandeur and elevation, by a fall which concluded his prosperous days: for in the year 886, Leo, surnamed the Philosopher, the son and successor of Basilus, deposed him from the patriarchal see, and confined him in an Armenian monastery, where he died in the year 891. The death of Photius, who was the only author of the schisms that divided the Greeks and Latins, might have been an occasion of removing these unhappy contests, and of restoring peace and concord in the church, if the Roman pontiffs had not been regardless of the demands of equity, as well as of the duty of Christian moderation. But they indulged their passions at the expence of sound policy, and would be satisfied with nothing less than the degradation of all the priests and bishops who had been ordained by Photius. The Greeks, on

486 *Schism between the Greeks and Latins.* [CENT. 9.  
the other hand, were shocked at the arrogance of these unjust pretensions, and refused to submit to them on any conditions. Hence resentment and irritation renewed the spirit of dispute which had been happily declining; religious as well as civil contests were again set on foot; new controversies were added to the old; until the fatal schism took place, which produced a lasting and total separation between the Greek and Latin churches\*.

## CHAP.

\* The distinguishing tenets of the Greek church are as follow :

1. They disown the authority of the pope, and deny that the church of Rome is the true Catholic church.

2. They do not baptize their children till they are three, four, five, six, ten, nay sometimes eighteen, years of age.

3. They insist that the sacrament of the Lord's supper ought to be administered in both kinds; and they give the sacrament to children immediately after baptism.

4. They deny that there is any such place as purgatory, notwithstanding they pray for the dead, that God would have mercy on them at the general judgment.

5. They exclude confirmation, extreme unction, and matrimony out of the seven sacraments.

6. They deny auricular confession to be a divine precept, and say it is only a positive injunction of the church.

7. They pay no religious homage to the eucharist.

8. They administer the communion in both kinds to the laity, both in sickness and in health, though they have never applied themselves to their confessors; because they are persuaded that a lively faith is all which is requisite for the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper.

9. They

## CHAP. II.

OF DOCTRINE, RITES, AND CEREMONIES IN THE  
NINTH CENTURY.

*Worship of Saints—Multiplication of these Celestial Advocates—Forgeries of Legends—Rage for Relics—Apology for this Passion—New Doctrines concerning the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist—Controversies on this Subject—Abolition of Choro-Episcopi—New Orders of Monks—Festivals in Honour of Saints—All-Saints'-Day—St. Michael—The Cross carried before the Pope—Ordeal Trials—by Cold Water—by Single Combat—by Fire—by the Cross.*

THE ignorance and corruption that dishonoured the Christian church, in this century, were great beyond measure; and were there no other examples of their enormity upon record, than the single instance of that stupid veneration which was paid to the bones and carcases of de-

9. They maintain that the Holy Ghost proceeds only from the Father, and not from the Son.

10. They admit of no images in relief, or embossed work; but use paintings, and sculptures in copper or silver.

11. They approve of the marriage of priests, provided they enter into that state before their admission into holy orders.

12. They condemn all fourth marriages.

13. They observe a number of holy days; and keep four fasts in the year more solemn than the rest, of which the fast in Lent, before Easter, is the chief.

parted saints, this would be sufficient to convince us of the deplorable progress of superstition. This idolatrous devotion was now considered as the most sacred and momentous branch of religion; nor did any dare to entertain the smallest hopes of finding the Deity propitious, before they had assured themselves of the protection and intercession of some of this sacred order. Hence every church, and indeed every private Christian, had their particular patron among the saints, from an apprehension perhaps that their spiritual interests would be but indifferently conducted by those who were already employed respecting the souls of others. This notion rendered it necessary to multiply prodigiously the number of saints, and to create daily new patrons for the deluded people; and this was indeed performed with sufficient zeal. The priests and monks employed their whole time and invention, and peopled at discretion the invisible world with imaginary protectors. They dispelled the thick darkness, which covered the pretended spiritual exploits of many holy men; and they invented both names and histories of saints \* who never had an existence, in order that they might not be at a loss to furnish the credulous multitude with objects proper to perpetuate their superstition, and to nourish their confidence. Many chose their own

\* See Dr. Middleton's Letter from Rome, *passim*, in which we find the names of St. Baccho, St. Viar, St. Amphibolus, Euodia, &c.



guides, and committed their spiritual interests either to phantoms of their own creation, or to distracted fanatics, whom they esteemed as saints, for no other reason than because they had lived like madmen.

The ecclesiastical councils found it necessary, at length, to set limits to the licentious superstition of the ignorant populace, who, with a view to have still more friends in the celestial regions (for such were their gross notions), were daily adding new saints to the list of their imaginary mediators. They accordingly declared, by a solemn decree, that no departed Christian should be considered as a member of the order of saints, before the bishop in a provincial council, and in presence of the people, had pronounced him worthy of that distinguished honour\*. This remedy, feeble and illusory as it was, contributed in some measure to restrain the fanatical temerity of the saint-makers; but, in its consequences, it was the occasion of a new accession of power to the see of Rome. Even so early as this century, many were of opinion that it was proper and expedient, though not absolutely necessary, that the decisions of bishops and councils should be confirmed by the consent and authority of the Roman pontiff, whom they considered as the supreme and universal bishop; nor will this appear surprising to any who reflect upon the enormous strides which the bishops of Rome

\* Mabillon, *Act. Sanctor. Ord. Benedicti*, Sec. v.

made toward unbounded dominion, in the preceding ages of barbarism, the corruption and darkness of which were peculiarly favourable to their ambitious pretensions. We have however no example of any person solemnly canonized by the bishop of Rome alone, before the tenth century, when Udalric, bishop of Augsberg, received this dignity in a formal manner from John XV. It is however certain that, previous to that period, the Roman pontiffs were consulted in similar cases, and their judgment respected in the choice of celestial mediators \*.

This preposterous multiplication of saints became a new source of abuses and frauds. It was thought necessary to write the lives of these celestial patrons, in order to procure for them the veneration and confidence of a deluded multitude; and all the resources of forgery and fable were consequently exhausted to celebrate exploits which had never existed. There is yet extant a prodigious quantity of these trifling legends, the greater part of which were undoubtedly forged, after the time of Charlemagne, by the monastic writers. The same impostors who peopled the celestial re-

\* See the candid and impartial account given of this matter by the late pope Benedict XIV. in his laborious work, *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione, et Beatorum Canonizatione*, lib. i. cap. vii. p. 50, tom. i. Opp. edit. Roman.—It were to be wished, that historians of the church of Rome would always imitate the prudence, moderation, and equity of that illustrious pontiff.

gions with fictitious saints, employed also their fruitful inventions in embellishing with false miracles, and other impertinent forgeries, the history of those who had been really martyrs or confessors in the cause of Christ. These fictions, however, did not pass with impunity; but were severely censured by some of the most eminent writers, even of the times in which they were imposed upon the credulity of the public. Various were the motives which engaged different persons to propagate or countenance these impostures. Some were incited to it by the seductions of a false devotion, which induced them to imagine that departed saints were highly delighted with the applauses and veneration of mortals; and never failed to reward with peculiar marks of their favour and protection such as were zealous in honouring their memories, and in celebrating their actions. The prospect of gain, and the ambitious desire of being revered by the multitude, engaged others to multiply the number, and to maintain the credit, of the legends\*, or registers of the saints. The churches, which were dedicated to the saints, were perpetually crowded with supplicants, who flocked to them with rich presents, in order to obtain assistance under the afflictions they suffered, or deliverance from the dangers which they had reason to apprehend. It was esteemed also a high honour to be the more immediate ministers of these tutelary mediators, who, it is proper to observe, were esteemed

\* Evidently from *legendum*, the gerund of *lego*, to read.

in proportion to their antiquity, and to the number and importance of the pretended miracles which had rendered their lives illustrious. This latter circumstance offered a strong temptation to such as were employed by the various churches in writing the lives of their tutelar saints, to supply by invention the defects of truth, and to embellish their legends with fictitious prodigies; and they were not only tempted to this imposture, but were even obliged to employ it, in order to increase the reputation of their respective patrons\*.

All this was however insufficient to satisfy the demands of superstition. The regard for relics, which had been for some centuries increasing, in this appeared to absorb the whole attention of mankind. Perhaps, however, we are inclined to treat the follies of past ages with too much severity; and though a zeal for religion will constitute no part of the character of the eighteenth century, perhaps our absurdities and fashions will not make a more respectable appearance in the eyes of posterity. To accumulate relics was the rage of the times; and even those who were less inclined to superstition in other respects, might be unreflectingly impelled along the tide of prevailing custom, and might be animated as we are to the imitation

\*. Of all the lives of the saints written in this century, none are more liable to suspicion than those drawn up by the Britons and Normans. See Mabillon, *Præf. ad Sæc. 1. Benedictin.* sub. init.



of the follies of our superiors. Many persons travelled during this age into the eastern provinces, and frequented the places which Christ and his disciples had honoured with their presence; in hopes that, with the bones and other sacred remains of the first heralds of the gospel, they might be enabled to extend comfort to dejected minds, to calm trembling consciences, to save sinking states, and defend their inhabitants from every species of calamity. These pious travellers did not indeed return home empty; the craft, dexterity, and knavery of the Greeks found a rich prey in the absurd credulity of the Latins, and made a profitable commerce of this new devotion. The latter paid considerable sums for legs and arms, skulls and jaw-bones (several of which were pagan, and some not human), with other things, supposed to have belonged to the primitive worthies of the Christian church; and thus the Latin churches came to the possession of those celebrated relics of St. Mark, St. James, St. Bartholomew, Cyprian, Pantalion, and others, which even at this day are occasionally exhibited with much ostentation. But though the veneration for the remains of celebrated persons, when carried to such an extreme as to be converted into a species of religious worship, is certainly culpable; and though the miracles which were attributed to these remains must be considered either as the delusions of fancy, or the forgeries of priest-



priestcraft; still we are not to suppose the passion itself without a foundation in the principles of human nature. It is impossible to confine the human affections in their operation; it is impossible not to connect with the objects of our regard and admiration every thing which was originally connected with them \*. The axe, which terminated the existence of the innocent and beautiful Anna Bullen, is still contemplated with some sensations of sympathy; and were it possible to survey the real cross on which the Saviour of mankind had been suspended, the person who did not consider it as more than an object of curiosity, must be destitute of all the most amiable feelings of the human heart.

A doctrine entirely new, concerning the manner in which the body and blood of Christ were present in the eucharist, made its appearance in the course of this century. It had been hitherto the unanimous opinion of the Church, that the body and blood of Christ were administered to those who received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and that they were consequently present at that holy institution: but the sentiments of Christians concerning the nature and manner of this presence were various and contradictory; nor had any council determined with precision that important

\* To kiss with pious lips the sacred earth,  
Which gave a Hampden or a Sidney birth.

point, or prescribed the manner in which this pretended presence was to be understood. Both reason and folly were hitherto left free in this matter ; nor had any imperious mode of faith suspended the exercise of the one, or restrained the extravagance of the other. But in this age Paschasius Radbert, a monk, and afterwards abbot, of Corbey, undertook to explain with precision, and to determine with certainty, the doctrine of the Church on this point ; for which purpose he composed, in the year 831, a Treatise concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. The doctrine of Paschasius amounted in general to the two following propositions : First, that, after the consecration of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, nothing remained of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present ; and secondly, that the body of Christ, thus present in the eucharist, was the same body which was born of the Virgin, which suffered upon the cross, and was raised from the dead \*. This new doctrine, and especially the second proposition, excited, as might well be expected, the astonishment of many. It was opposed by Rabanus Maurus, Heribald, and others ; though they did not all refute it in the same manner, nor upon the same principles. Charles the

\* The same absurd fanatic maintained that the delivery of the Virgin was performed in a miraculous manner, without the womb being opened. Saur, 818.

Bald, upon this occasion, ordered the famous Ratramn and Johannes Scotus to draw up a clear and rational explication of that important doctrine, which Radbert seemed to have so egregiously corrupted. These learned divines executed with zeal and diligence the order of the emperor. The treatise of Scotus perished in the ruins of time; but that of Ratramn is still extant, and furnished ample matter of dispute both in the last and present century. It is remarkable that, in this controversy, each of the contending parties were almost as much divided among themselves as they were at variance with their adversaries. Radbert, who began the dispute, contradicts himself in many places, departs from his own principles, and maintains, in one part of his book, conclusions which he had disavowed in another. His principal adversary, Bertramn or Ratramn, seems in some respects liable to the same charge: he appears to follow in general the doctrine of those who deny that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the holy sacrament; and to affirm, on the contrary, that they are only represented by the bread and wine, as their signs or symbols. Johannes Scotus Erigena, whose philosophical genius rendered him more accurate, and spread through his writings that logical precision so much wanted and so highly desirable in polemical productions, was the only disputant in this contest who expressed his sentiments with perspicuity, method, and consistency; and

and declared plainly that the bread and wine were the signs and symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ. The other divines of this age fluctuate in their opinions, express themselves with ambiguity, and embrace and reject the same tenets at different times, as if they had no fixed or permanent principles.

Scarcely any alterations took place in the form of church government during this century : the only event of this kind indeed worthy of notice was the abolition of the choro-episcopi, or rural bishops, in the western church ; who, being discovered not to be true bishops, were deprived of their sees, and the order discontinued by the pope's decree. To remedy this deficiency, a number of new convents were erected, and some new orders of regulars established ; in particular the order of canons regular of St. James la Spada, which was instituted in 830 by Don Ramirus, king of Leon.

It would be endless to enter into an exact enumeration of the various rites and ceremonies which were now introduced, and of which some were adopted by the whole body of Christians, and others only by certain churches. It will be necessary, therefore, to dismiss this subject with a general statement only, and point out the sources from which the curious reader may derive a more particular knowledge of the absurdities of this superstitious age. The bodies of the saints transported



from foreign countries, or discovered at home by the industry and diligence of pious or designing priests, not only obliged the rulers of the church to augment the number of festivals or holidays already established, but also to diversify the ceremonies in such a manner, that each saint might have his peculiar worship. As the authority also and credit of the clergy depended much upon the high opinion which was entertained of the virtue and merit of the saints they had canonized and presented to the multitude as objects of religious veneration, it was necessary to amuse and surprise them by a variety of pompous and striking ceremonies, by images, processions, and similar inventions. Among other novelties, the feast of All Saints was added in 835, by Gregory IV. to the Latin calendar\*; and the festival of St. Michael, which had been long observed with the greatest marks of devotion by the Orientals and Italians, began now to be respected more zealously and universally among the Latin Christians†. It is also supposed that the custom of carrying the cross before the pope commenced in this century.

It was not only in the solemn acts of religious worship that superstition reigned with an unlimited sway; its influence extended even to the affairs

\* See Mabillon, *De Re Diplomatica*, p. 537.

† The holidays, or festivals of the saints, were as yet but few in number among the Latins, as appears from a poem of Florus, published by Martene in the fifth volume of his *Thesaurus Anecdotor.* p. 505.



of civil life, and was observable in most of the transactions of men; particularly among the Latin Christians, who retained, with more obstinacy than the Greeks, a multitude of customs, which derived their origin from the rites of paganism, the true and original source of those barbarous institutions that prevailed during this and the following century: such were the various methods by which it was usual for persons accused to prove their innocence in doubtful cases, either by the trial of cold water, by single combat, by fire ordeal, or the cross.

In the trial of cold water, the person accused had the right foot and the left hand bound together, and was in this posture thrown naked into the water: if he sunk, he was acquitted; but if he floated upon the surface, this was considered as an evidence of guilt. The most respectable authors attribute the invention of this superstitious trial to Pope Eugenius II. Baluzius has inserted, in the second volume of his *Capitularia*, the solemn forms of prayer and protestation which Eugenius had caused to be drawn up, as an introduction to this absurd and cruel practice\*.

The

\* Fleury and Spanheim also consider this pontiff as its first inventor: on the other hand, Father Le Brun, a priest of the oratory, maintains (in his *Histoire Critique des Pratiques Superstitieuses*, tom. ii. p. 140, &c. edit. d'Amsterdam) that this custom was much more ancient than Eugenius, and his reasons are not unworthy of attention. Be that as it may, this custom was

The trial by duel, or single combat, was introduced towards the conclusion of the fifth century, by Gondebaud, king of the Burgundians, after the abuse of oaths had occasioned the most horrible perjuries, and opened a door to every species of injustice. The duel was then added to the oath by Gondebaud: the successful combatant was supposed to be in the right; and this barbarous test of truth and justice was, in spite of humanity and common sense, adopted by the Lombards, French, and Germans, and borrowed from them by other nations. It was prohibited first in the year 855, in the third council of Valence in Dauphiny.

The fire ordeal was practised in different modes. The accused either held a burning ball of iron in his hand, or was obliged to walk bare-foot upon heated plough-shares, the number of which was increased in proportion to the number or enormity of the crimes imputed to him; and sometimes a glove of red-hot iron was used on this occasion. If in these trials the person impeached remained unhurt, and discovered no signs of pain, he was discharged as innocent; otherwise he was punished as guilty\*.

The  
condemned and abrogated at the request, or rather by the authority, of Lewis the Meek, about the year 829. It was however revived; and was practised in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

\* The first account we have of Christians appealing to this species of trial, as a proof of their innocence, is that of Simplicius,

The trial by the cross was made by obliging the contending parties to stretch out their arms ; and he that continued the longest in this posture, gained the cause.

plicius, bishop of Autun, who lived in the fourth century. This prelate, as we are informed, before his promotion to the episcopal order, had married a wife who loved him tenderly, and who, unwilling to quit him after his advancement, continued to sleep in the same chamber with her spouse. The sanctity of Simplicius suffered by his wife's affection ; it was rumoured that the holy man, though a bishop, persisted, in opposition to the ecclesiastical canons, to taste the sweets of matrimony. Upon which the dame, in presence of a great concourse of people, took up a considerable quantity of burning coals, which she held in her clothes, and applied to her breast, without the least injury to her person, or damage to her garments, as the legend says ; and her example being followed by her husband with the same success, the ignorant multitude admired the miracle, and proclaimed the innocence of the pious pair. Bricius, or St. Brice (whom Mr. Collier, in his *Ecclesiastical History of England*, vol. i. p. 231, represents by mistake as the first Christian who endeavoured to clear himself in this way), played a trick of much the same nature in the fifth century.

## CHAP. III.

OF THE SECTS WHICH APPEARED IN THE NINTH  
CENTURY.

*Predestinarians—Abrahamians—Persecution of the  
Paulicians.*

THE spirit of innovation will generally be found to accompany the spirit of enquiry. But from the seventh to the twelfth or thirteenth century, the church was involved in dark and misty stilness. The notions also which were entertained of the infallibility of councils and of patriarchs, sufficiently repressed the enterprising spirit of those who indulged speculation in less distinguished situations : that portion of the history, therefore, which is appropriated to controversies and to sects, has been gradually contracting ; and in this and the succeeding century an almost perfect unanimity, in ignorance at least, seems to have pervaded each of the two great bodies of eastern and western Christians.

Those disputes however, which have so frequently divided and perplexed the Christian world, those concerning the predestination of mankind

kind and the divine grace, were revived in this century by a French monk of the name of Godeschald\*. This uncharitable innovator maintained, that God predestined to eternal death a certain number of men, for whom Jesus Christ would not die; and at the same time predestined others to salvation by an effect of his good pleasure. The first who condemned this doctrine was archbishop Raban, in a council held at Mentz in 848. But Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, not content with confirming this sentence, in another synod, in the following year, subjected the unfortunate Godeschald to a severe flagellation, and ordered him afterwards to be imprisoned. Several writers also attacked this heretic; among whom were Pandulus bishop of London, and John Erigena, called Scotus. Some also, who were distinguished both by rank and abilities, appeared in his defence. Of these were Amelon archbishop of Lyons, Romi his successor, Florus the deacon, and the whole church of Lyons; Prudence bishop of Troyes, Loup abbot of Farieres in France, and the learned monk Ratramn. This doctrine was also approved by several councils; by that of Valence in 855, and by those of Langres and Tulle in 859.

It has been asserted that some new opinions made their appearance among the sect of the

\* Formey, cent. ix.



Paulicians; and, in particular, that a party of them distinguished themselves by the name of Abrahamians, not from the Hebrew patriarch, but from their founder, an obscure person of that name. The particular opinions of this sect, however, if it maintained any such, are lost in the general oblivion to which the flames of persecution consigned almost every thing appertaining to the Paulicians, whose sufferings in general can never be sufficiently regretted.

## CHAP. IV.

OF LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN IN THE  
NINTH CENTURY.

*Photius—Greek Commentators—Moses Barcepha—Munificence of Charlemagne—Christian Druthmar—Bertharius—Rabanus Maurus—Walafrid Strabo—Claudius of Turin—Hincmar—Remigius of Auxerre—Agobard—Theodorus Abucara—Controversy with the Mahometans—Eginhard—Theganus of Treves—Anastasius—Alfred the Great—Reform of the Laws of Justinian—Basilican Code.*

THE most illustrious character of this century among the Greeks was Photius, whose eventful history has already occupied some pages, as connected with the general state of the Christian world. “Greece, so fertile in genius,” says the learned Cave, “has never produced a person of more universal abilities, of sounder judgment, of deeper penetration, of more unbounded reading, or more unwearied diligence.” He has made extracts from upwards of three hundred ancient authors, all of whom he must have diligently studied and digested; and while he was thus indefatigable in study, let it be remembered that he was engaged in the most active duties of a statesman, and

and involved in the most perplexing consequences of controversy.

He composed, among other works, a book of Questions relating to the sense of different passages of Scripture, and an Exposition of the Epistles of St. Paul.

The other Greek writers, who attempted to explain the holy scriptures, did little more than compile and accumulate various passages from the commentators of the preceding ages; and this method was the origin of those *catenæ*, or chains of commentaries, so much in use among the Greeks during this century, of which a considerable number have descended to our time, and which consisted entirely in a collection of the explanations of scripture that were scattered through the ancient divines. The greater part of the theological writers, finding themselves incapable of more arduous undertakings, confined their labours to this species of compilation.

The Latin commentators were superior in number to those among the Greeks, owing to the zeal and munificence of Charlemagne, who both by his liberality and by his example had excited and encouraged the doctors of the preceding age to the study of the scriptures. Of these expositors there are two at least who are worthy of esteem; Christian Druthmar, whose Commentary on St. Matthew has been trans-  
mitted

mitted to posterity\*; and the abbot Bertharius, whose Two Books concerning Fundamentals are also said to be still extant. The rest seem unequal to the important office of sacred critics, and may be divided into two classes; the class of those who merely collected, and reduced into a mass, the opinions and explications of the ancients; and that of a fantastical set of expositors, who were constantly labouring to deduce a variety of abstruse and hidden significations from every passage of scripture, which they in general performed in a very absurd and uncouth manner. At the head of the first class was Rabanus Maurus, who acknowledged that he borrowed from the ancient doctors the materials he made use of in illustrating the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the Epistles of St. Paul; Walafrid Strabo, who adopted his explications chiefly from Rabanus; Claudius of Turin, who trod in the footsteps of Augustin and Origen; Hincmar, whose Exposition of the Book of Kings, compiled from the fathers, is yet extant; Remigius of Auxerre, who derived from the same source his Illustrations of the Psalms, and other books of sacred writ; Sedulius, who explained in the same manner the Epistles of St. Paul; Florus; Haymo bishop of Halberstadt; and others, of whom the

\* See R. Simon, *Histoire Critique des Principaux Commentateurs du Nouv. Testament*, chap. xxv. p. 348; as also his *Critique de la Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique de M. du Pin*, tom. i. p. 293.

limits of this work will not admit an extended character.

The defence of Christianity against the Jews and pagans was greatly neglected in this century. Agobard, however, as well as Amulo and Rabanus Maurus, chastised the insolence and malignity of the Jews, and exposed their various absurdities and errors; while the emperor Leo, Theodorus Abucara, and other writers whose performances are lost, employed their polemic labours against the progress of the Saracens, and refuted their impious and extravagant system. It is to be lamented that, on some occasions, truth has been sacrificed to religious zeal by these vehement polemics; and that they have condescended to report such circumstances of Mahomet and his disciples, as are not only unsupported by authentic testimony, but even contrary to probability itself.

The famous Eginhard, secretary to Charlemagne, who wrote the life of his benefactor, is the most ancient of the German historians: he is supposed to have had an intrigue with the emperor's daughter, whom he afterwards married\*. He founded the monastery of Selgenstadt, in the diocese of Mentz. Theganus bishop of Treves also wrote a history of Lewis the Meek. Anastasius the abbot, and librarian to the pope, is a learned and valuable historian; he was sent by the em-

\* A pleasant account of this intrigue is related in the Spectator.  
peror



emperor Lewis II. to Basil the eastern emperor, and was present at the eighth general council, where he proved of infinite service to the pope's legates, from his extensive knowledge of both the Greek and Latin languages. He translated the acts of that council, those of the seventh, and many other acts and monuments of the Greek church, as well as the Tripartite History, which contains the Chronicles of Nicephorus, of George, and of Theophanes, from the creation to the reign of Leo the Armenian. He is also generally considered as the author of the Lives of the Popes, which are falsely inscribed with the name of the Roman pontiff Damasus.

The English Alfred deserves the most respectful mention in the annals of this age, not only as a great monarch, but as a great scholar, considering the age in which he lived, and the few advantages which he enjoyed. He translated the General History of Orosius into Saxon, and composed several other works; and so great was his admiration of learning that it is asserted that no unlearned person was permitted to exercise any public office or function during the course of his reign.

The Justinian code of laws underwent some improvement about this period. The Pandects, the Institutes, the Digests, and the Code were reduced, by the command of the emperor Leo, to one body of laws, which was divided into six parts and sixty books: they were called *Basilica*,  
either

either from the emperor's father Basil, who began the work, or because they were imperial constitutions. This is the code of civil law which the Greeks continued to use till the destruction of their empire ; and was written in Greek, as that of Justinian was in Latin \*.

\* Fleury, xi. 499.

## APPENDIX.

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ON

### THE VISION OF CONSTANTINE.

IT is observed by Mr. Gibbon, that the real or imaginary cause of the conversion of Constantine to the Christian faith, deserves and demands the attention of posterity\*. But though the historian professed to form, upon this position, a just estimate of the case, the last defence of the asserted vision† was passed over by him undiscussed. Without stopping to account for so designed an omission—as an eminent divine of the Gallican Church had pronounced that work an accurate and advantageous statement of whatever could establish, upon the principles of just criticism, so important a fact; a protestant of equal celebrity hath not only styled it judicious and learned ‡; but Mr. Gibbon himself crowned it with praise §—it cannot but have

\* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. ii. p. 193.

† Dissertation Critique sur la Vision de Constantin, par M. l'Abbé Du Voisin, p. 331. Approbation signed *De La Hogue*.

‡ Traité de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne, par J. Vernet, tom. x. p. 277.

§ Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. ii. 201.

claims

claims to notice and respect. If, however, it be declared in the outset, that notwithstanding the merit and success of this defence, it hath failed to convince the writer of these remarks, he hopes his venerable friend, who solicits that the arguments he hath offered might be severely discussed \*, will impute the rejection of the miracle, not to the bias of protestant prejudice, but insufficiency of evidence to operate conviction.

It has been judged no light objection to the admission of this vision, that Eusebius, in writing his Ecclesiastical History, should seem to have purposely suppressed it; for, certainly, a miraculous interposition, to which had been ascribed such momentous effects, and which was commemorated by so many monuments, could never have been forgotten, at the time when he wrote. Upon this, however, no stress should be laid; since, admitting that Eusebius then disbelieved it, his silence, as implying caution, is in favour of the fact, if upon fuller proof he were afterwards convinced; and what further proof he afterward had, it here will be proper to state. This was then the attestation of Constantine himself, made to Eusebius in person, and for the purpose of inserting in his *Life of the Emperor* † the miracle he omitted in his *History* of

\* See the Preface of Abbé Du Voisin, p. 18.

† It is clear from the words of Eusebius that he was compiling the materials for the *Life of Constantine*, and that the account was

of the Church. The effect, however, of this testimony on the mind of Eusebius it will not be hard to perceive. In the first place, the bishop is careful to observe, that the vision, if related by any other than Constantine, could scarcely be entitled to credit; nor even then, if he had not confirmed it by oaths: ὈΡΚΟΙΣ ΤΕ ΠΙΣΩΣΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ : but, adds he, who would any longer hesitate, especially when also the time that intervened bore testimony to the publicity of the relation : μαλιδ' ὅτε καὶ ὁ μετὰ ταῦτα χρόνος, ἀληθῆ τῷ λόγῳ παρέχεσθαι τὴν μαρτυρίαν. These now being the grounds for inserting the account, it is obvious, that, though Eusebius carried his complaisance to his sovereign and benefactor as far as integrity would permit, yet, with great delicacy and address, it may be perceived, that he was not himself convinced. For, as though the truth of a testimony depended upon the external rank of the witness—if any other spectator of the vision than the emperor had related it, or even if he had not confirmed it by oaths, it would have scarcely been entitled to credit: nor even then, if the distance of time from the event had not countenanced the story. But can it hence be inferred, that Eusebius believed

was delivered to him for insertion in it : Αὐτὴ δὲ τῇ νικητῇ Βασιλεὺς τοῖς ΤΗΝ ΓΡΑΦΗΝ ΔΙΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΙΣ ἡμῖν, μακροῖς ὑστερον χρόνοις, ὅτε πξιώθημεν τῆς αὐτῆς γνώσεως τε καὶ ὁμιλίας, ἐξαγγέλλοντες, ὅρκους τε πῖσω-  
σαμεν τὸν λόγον. It was hard that after Eusebius had been honoured with the emperor's intimacy, he could not be believed without swearing.



it?—Certainly, not. For, have we the slightest intimation that he did?—No : but instead of it, a question put no less dextrously than shrewdly : “Who upon such grounds would hesitate?” thus leaving the emperor’s narration to the emperor’s credit. Whatever popular language then Eusebius might use in an oratorical harangue (which can never be strained to imply a belief of the fact), it is to be inferred that, in recording the emperor’s relation, he was as little persuaded of its truth, as when he suppressed in his history the mention of the vision. To the report of it, at that time, Eusebius could not be a stranger. The attestations of the soldiers, who by the emperor’s own declaration were equally eye-witnesses with himself of the cross and inscription ; the standard made to represent them ; and the wonderful effects attributed to it : these, together with the monuments erected to commemorate the fact, must have all been familiarly known ; before the emperor, to preserve the integrity of his character, and aggrandize with posterity his fame, employed Eusebius to record the story of his life, and with these views related the vision. The oaths then to confirm the narrative, and the narrative delivered for the purpose assigned, were the only novelties then offered to historical notice. But admitting, for the sake of argument, Eusebius was convinced ; what follows ? Why, that the evidence of all the soldiers who saw the vision, and the wonderful

derful effects it produced, were of themselves insufficient to convince him, till the emperor adopted the expedient of swearing.—Or take it otherwise; notwithstanding that the soldiers had vouched for the miracle, of which, with the emperor, they had all been spectators, and the emperor himself had confirmed it by oaths, the whole of this evidence would scarcely have sufficed, if time had not witnessed the publicity of the fact. Here, after carefully adverting to the passage, let us remark the particulars announced. This relation then of the emperor was, that, “near the hour of noon, when the sun began to decline, he saw with his own eyes, in the very heaven, the trophy of a cross, consisting of light, upon \* the body of the sun, to which was annexed an inscription expressing, **BY THIS CONQUER.** At the sight of this phenomenon, amazement overpowered both himself and the soldiery on the expedition with him, who also beheld this wonderful vision.”

Upon this much of the story it is proper to observe, that though the hour of this appearance be so minutely defined, no day nor year is mentioned, nor any country or place; omissions that by no

\* Ὑπερκειμενον τῇ ἡλίῳ σταυρὸς τροπαιοῖσι, literally *the trophy of the cross lying upon the sun*; and so the Abbé explains it, p. 313; but from the representation in the picture before the palace of Constantine, it appears that ὑπερκειμενον here signifies *placed upon it*; and, accordingly, on the helmets of the soldiers, described by Prudentius, the cross rose above their crests.

means favour the report.—Again—The words το στρατιωτικόν ἅπαν are commonly understood of *the army at large*; now, if this be the sense they were meant to imply, how hardened against proof must Eusebius have been, to resist, for twenty years together, and more, the eye-witness of so many thousands, and that too, ὅτε καὶ ὁ μέγα ταῦτα χρόνος, ἀληθῆ τῷ λόγῳ παρέχε τὴν μαρτυρίαν, when every testimony time could adduce had concurred to witness the fact!—On the contrary, if the phrase be restricted to the soldiers with the emperor, supposing them a detachment from the army to serve the occasion; a little light will break in to illustrate the case. Hence, therefore, it may be worth while to examine in what manner the emperor prefaced his account.—“Constantine, reflecting that he needed a force superior to arms, for subduing the forceries and magic employed by Maxentius, anxiously looked out for the aid of some God, as that which alone could secure him success. Beginning therefore to consider what God to address, he was stricken by the thought that as the emperors, who confided in a multitude of Gods, and, to honour them, withheld neither victims nor gifts, had been nevertheless deceived by false promises and oracles [—this hitherto was not Maxentius’s case—], he therefore determined [—notwithstanding these divinities (which in the same breath he declares to be non-entities) had rendered his opponent invincible

cible by arms—] to turn at once his back upon them, and seek to the true God, the God of his father. Whilst then, from this motive, Constantine was praying for supernal aid, the vision recorded was said to have happened. Hence, a pertinent guess will suggest itself, for what purpose the expedition was undertaken, and why the emperor should have had *σπαχιωτικόν*, such a detachment with him. After having recounted to Eusebius the apparition, at which himself and his party were so strangely overpowered; he adds, that he was perplexed to conjecture what the vision might mean, and continued to ponder till night came upon him. During, however, the hours of his slumber, Christ the Son of God presented himself before him, and holding forth the sign he had seen in the heavens, bade him make from it a military standard, and bear it in battle as a certain protection\*. Constantine, rising at day-break, imparted this new wonder to his friends, and then sending for jewellers and goldsmiths [—how fortunate to be at hand with materials and tools!—], seated himself amid them, described the pattern of the sign he had seen, and ordered them to copy it in jewels and gold.—“This standard, adds Eusebius, we once happened to see.”

The emperor, as he said, impressed with this extraordinary appearance, and resolving to worship

\* Eusebius expressly asserts, that the emperor used this standard as a *defensive, or divine charm*, against his enemies.



no other God but that he had seen, applied to some who were versed in the mysteries of his doctrine [—here the miracle begins still farther to unfold—] asked who that God was, and what was intended by the sign [—questions consistent, no doubt, with the knowledge he had before expressed of the God of his father, and his resolution of confiding entirely in him!—]. They informed him in return, that this was God, the only-begotten Son of the one and only God; that the sign was the emblem of immortality, and trophy of his victory obtained over death. On this, taking these priests for advisers, he was convinced that the God that had appeared was devoutly to be worshipped; and hence, filled with good hope, he undertook to extinguish the flames of oppression.

This precious and potent talisman being thus obtained, it was consigned to a body of fifty chosen men, remarkable for piety, valour and strength [—a wise precaution to preserve a palladium in which invincibility itself was given to inhere!—]. Now of whom is it probable this guard consisted, but, το στρατιωτικὸν ἅπαν, that very body of pious bravoes, which, upon the expedition with the emperor to pray for a charm, had seen the very archetype itself? and on whom could the high honour of displaying the representation be so properly conferred, as on those who could at once vouch for the likeness to its divine original, so miraculously exhibited on the sun?—



To this salutary trophy it further belonged, that, wherever it approached, the enemy fled ; and such a safeguard was it to these fifty, who bore it in turn, that, instead of deriving security from their prowess and might, whatever darts were discharged at the bearer, they passed him unhurt, and were all received by the staff. On this last circumstance told by the emperor, it is not only remarked by Eusebius that *it was a thing SURPASSING ALL MIRACLE* ; *Και ην δε τολο ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΣ* ; but subjoined : “ the account is not OUR’S, but, AGAIN, the emperor’s himself, who, with other particulars, related this in our hearing :” *ουχ’ ΗΜΕΤΕΡΟΣ δ’ ο λογος, αλλ’ αυτη ΠΑΛΙΝ βασιλεως, εις ημετερας ακοας προς ετεροις και τολον απομνημονευσαντι*. Thus cautious was the historian in adducing his voucher, and thus anxious to avoid being thought to assent !

The emperor related, and, according to the expression, *from memory* :—hence, as no written record of the time was produced, it is probable that none such existed. In the space then of above twenty years, Constantine might have varied in telling his tale, and thence the variety of reports might arise ; but previous however to examining these, it may be proper to vindicate Eusebius, by shewing that what he uttered in his panegyric on the emperor is no proof of faith in the miracle alleged. His words are these : “ This religious prince having opposed to the multitude of his enemies the salutary and

enlivening sign of the cross, to strike terror into them and preserve himself from danger, at once triumphed over enemies and dæmons. The battle being ended, he rendered aloud to the author of his victory the thanksgiving he owed ; he erected columns to announce to all men the sign that had rendered him victorious, and reared in the capital a solemn trophy, to evince that this sign, at all times memorable, had been the protection of the Roman empire.—The emperor hath honoured the sign effective of victory, and of which he hath experienced the divine virtue.”—But, carefully sifted, what is there in this ? Not a word to shew a belief of the vision. That, fighting under this banner, the emperor was victorious, is well known and fully admitted. That the story of the miracle had been told through the army, and a standard made in consequence of it, is what no one will seek to deny. Grant also that Maxentius boasted dæmoniack aid. Hence, as the natural effect of enthusiasm on the soldiers of Constantine must no doubt have been great ; so the expressions of triumphing over Satan by the cross of Christ might be figuratively applied to the success of Constantine under that banner, by Eusebius, without his believing the vision to be real. Add likewise, that the bishop, in pronouncing a panegyric on his sovereign and benefactor, would obviously go as far in accommodating his language to circumstances, as the limits of truth would allow ; and that he proceeded beyond,

yond, there is nothing to prove, either in the last citation, or the account of the triumph. Indeed, this is admitted by the Abbé himself, who candidly declares, that “ the expressions of a panegyric are not to be interpreted in their rigorous acceptation ;” and frankly confesses, that “ there would be sufficient reason for doubting the celestial appearance, if its evidence depended on passages like these\*.” Hence then, reverting to the emperor’s account, it becomes pertinent to observe, that, although he were victorious under the banner of the cross, it by no means proves his story to be true ; and if its veracity rest on the piety of his character, it will be more than enough to reply, that, as his piety, subsequent to the vision alleged, could dispense with repeated murders, and the murder in particular of a son—not to instance the perjuries laid to his charge†—he was not likely to boggle at the attestation of a fraud, to which he owed the acquisition of the empire itself ; especially if those who with him concerted the project, persisted in maintaining the fraud to be pious. The question then may be safely left to this issue : Whether, all circumstances duly considered, it be more rational to conclude the story a fiction ; or that the miracle was absolutely true.—But let us proceed to the further accounts.

\* Dissertation sur la Vision de Constantin, p. 31. 2.

† Zosimus imputes the violation of oaths to Constantine, as equally notorious with the murder of his son. Book ii. p. 685.

By the author of the tract *on the Death of Persecutors*, admitted to be Lactantius (preceptor to the son whom Constantine poisoned), the history is given with material variation from the foregoing account of Constantine himself. In it we are told of a “contest between Maxentius and Constantine, in which the army of the former prevailed, till Constantine, with confirmed resolution, and a mind prepared for the worst that could happen, advanced his troops towards the city, and took post in front of the Milvian bridge: that this was on the 27th of October, which ended the fifth year of Maxentius’ reign: that Constantine was admonished in his sleep to mark the celestial sign of *God* on the shields of his soldiers, and then commence his attack. He obeyed the command, and the Greek letter *Chi* being transversed with a line bent round at the top, he marks *Christ* on the shields. The army, equipped accordingly with this sign, draws the sword\*.”

The first observation which offers itself is, that though no date nor place were mentioned by Constantine for the time and scene of his miraculous vision, yet, from its being connected with events prior to his arrival in Italy, it hath been inferred (and Prudentius, with others, confirm the conclusion), that the miraculous vision happened in Gaul: whence the fact, if true, which Lactantius relates, was not the same, but a different miracle.


\* De Mortibus Persecut. Cap. XLVI.



Yet, whether it were another, or the same, the difficulties it creates are equally great ; for, were it the same, how happened it to be so differently told? Surely, if either story be entitled to credit, the preference must be assigned to Constantine's account ; for, in the points which differ, both cannot be true. Lactantius is silent on the noon-day vision, and the cross on the sun with the legend annexed. Nor does he mention the standard made from them, which was always produced with such marvellous effects. Where, let it be asked, when at this emergency in particular all was at stake, where was this sacred ensign which God himself had declared, to Constantine in person, should for ever insure him success? And how happened Constantine likewise to forget the monogram on the shields he was ordered to paint?

On the contrary; if the miracle in Lactantius were another and later, why did not Eusebius relate it with the first? Or, can it be supposed that Constantine, who, to have that recorded, vouched for it with oaths, should in utter silence have passed over this? The only circumstances that agree in these different tales, are such as relate to the *sign*, and the *charm*; yet these will be found by no means alike. As to the charm, or effect of the standard, it ever was marvellous, and always the same; whilst the inscription of the shields but served for the occasion. The sign has nothing to shew it was the cross on the sun; nay, the  
context



context itself declares the reverse : for, after saying that Constantine was admonished in his sleep to mark on the shields *the celestial sign of God*, Cœleste Dei signum ; which, it is added, he did ; what does this sign appear to have been ?—Not a cross with the appendages, *By this conquer* ; but the Greek *Chi* transversed by a *Rho*, or in other words, the monogram of Christ ; and so it immediately follows : CHRISTUM in scutis notat : *he paints CHRIST on the shields.*” The Abbé, nevertheless, asks : Why call this monogram *a celestial sign*, but because it had been seen by the army, in the heaven\*? It is answered, that Constantine is silent as to any such appearance ; and Lactantius mentions nought that the army had seen. It was to Constantine, in his sleep, that the monogram was shewn, and if of this vision heaven were the scene, the monogram was plainly a *celestial sign* : but since the term Χριστος, which this abbreviation was meant to express, signifies the ANOINTED, it might, in that sense, be so styled, as referring to the attestation of the unction from on high, when, at the baptism of Jesus, the heavens were opened, and the divine voice then proclaimed, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The next evidence brought forward is that of Optatian. Let us here examine the proof it contains. Concerning it, the learned Abbé confesses, that “ though in the panegyric of this poet on

\* Dissertation sur la Vision de Constantin, p. 41.

Constantine, no mention occur of the miraculous vision, yet plain traces may be seen of the opinion, that Constantine was victorious by the sign of the cross."

Admitting this statement in its fullest extent; can the existence of an opinion evince it to be true? Before a conclusion of this kind be drawn, it is at least incumbent to shew, that the opinion is consistent with the story of the fact: which in the instance before us is far from the case. The panegyric on Constantine, which the Abbé here cites, is a poem in acrostics and different figures. The fourth represents a *vessel* with the *monogram* of Christ, which together are denominated *celestial signs*:

Prodentur minio *cælestia* signa legenti.

The ninth figure is the same monogram; as is also the sixteenth; but in the latter, one branch of the X is formed of words that express the divine protection with which the emperor had been favoured: these however were not: *In hoc signo vinces*, but:

Summi Dei auxilio nutuque perpetuo tutus.

In another figure, the monogram bears a different form; for, between the openings of the X, the five letters of *Jesus* are interspersed, and, in reference to the inscription on the statue of Constantine, conjunctively styled *the salutary sign*. Hence, notwithstanding the conclusion which the Abbé has

drawn, this manifest variety is but little in favour of the emperor's vision.

Nor will the testimony of the two pagan panegyrist any better confirm the miraculous signs. In the first place, it is granted that neither hath mentioned the luminous cross; nor, in the second, do they notice the name on the shields. Whatever interrogatories therefore might be addressed by the anonymous orator to Constantine, or whatever intercourse supposed with his new-chosen God, the evidence amounts but to this, that, because the emperor had conquered whilst using the cross, his story of the vision must be true.

The second orator, Nazarius, goes farther, since he makes no scruple of affirming to the emperor himself, "that it was in the mouth of all the Gauls, that they had seen armies, which declared themselves divinely commissioned; that their bucklers blazed with an indescribable flashing, that a light flamed terribly from their celestial armour; and that, in addressing each other, they were heard to pronounce: *We seek Constantine; to Constantine let us go!*"—Well might Nazarius add what immediately follows: "In future, O most grave historians! be assured your narrations will be credited. We can believe the wonders ye record, who, ourselves, even now experience still greater. The greatness of our prince conciliates our faith to the prodigies of the ancients, but at  
the

the same time detracts from their miraculous strangeness\*.” But whatever credit Nazarius may deserve, the Abbé himself confesses, that the prodigy here spoken of has nothing in common with the vision of Constantine related by Eusebius and the other ecclesiastical writers†. What then is it cited to prove? At most, that it either was the pagan way of telling the story; or else, a new miracle not less glorious to christianity than the vision of the cross itself.

St. Artemius next comes to make his report. His evidence may be thought of no little weight, as he was not only a martyr to the Christian cause, but also an eye-witness of the vision itself. But, as the learned Abbé admits, that Metaphrastes, who transmitted his acts and discourses, did not write till the tenth century; that he is an author in whom we cannot confide; that his original work has never been printed; that he confessedly hath blended fables with truth, and that his reputed acts have besides been amended‡; should such evidence be considered as of any account? Yes, replies the Abbé, inasmuch as it accords with the histories of the time. What then is this eye-witness made to relate?—“Constantine declined towards Christ, having been called by him, when he engaged in that obstinate battle against

\* Nazarii Panegyri. Constant. Dissert. sur la Vision, p. 60.

† Ibid, p. 61, 2.

‡ Dissertation sur la Vision, p. 67.

Maxentius; for there appeared to him at noon the sign of the cross, more splendid than the sunbeams themselves; and indicated in letters of gold, that he should be victorious. The letters we also beheld and read: moreover the whole army contemplated the appearance: and many in thine army are witnesses of it\*.”—Here indeed have we Pelion on Ossa; one wonder piled on another. If the appearance were miraculous in itself, what less than miracle in every spectator could have enabled their eyes distinctly to gaze, not only on the sun in its meridian splendour, but to contemplate a cross upon it—*radiis solis SPLENDIDIUS*—more radiant even than itself, and read the very letters of *gold* inscribed upon it?—Were it not for retorting the charge of prejudice, it might well be wondered how a writer of so accurate a judgment could have been led to cite a voucher like this.

The account of Prudentius is as follows. In stating it we adopt the Abbé’s arrangement†.—“It is necessary, O queen (Rome), that you willingly acknowledge my standards, on which the figure of the cross, wrought in jewels, glitters; or is conspicuously borne on long poles of solid gold.

By

\* Dissertation sur la Vision, p. 66.

† Agnoscas, Regina, libens mea signa necesse est:

In quibus effigies crucis aut gemmata refulget,

Aut longis folido ex auro præfertur in hastis.

Hoc signo invictus transmissis Alpibus ultor

Servitium solvit miserabile Constantinus,



By this sign, the unconquered avenger Constantine, when Maxentius oppressed thee in his pestilential court, after passing the Alps, loosened thy miserable yoke.—What victorious arms did the Milvian-bridge behold majestically wielded, what a sign the avenging right hand advance, on what a staff the embossed banner shine, when announcing to the city the approach of a leader, the worshipper of Christ, it precipitated the tyrant upon it into the depths of the Tyber! The purple labarum exhibited Christ [that is, the monogram] interwoven with gems and gold: Christ was inscribed on the bearings of the shields: and a cross superadded blazed above their crests. The most illustrious order of senators, which preceded thee

Quum te pestifera premeret Maxentius aula.—  
Testis christicolæ ducis adventantis ad Urbem  
Milvius, exceptum Tiberina in stagna tyrannum  
Præcipitans, quamam victricia viderit arma  
Majestate regi, quod signum dextera vindex  
Prætulerit, quali radiarint stemmate pila.  
Christus purpureum gemmanti textus in auro  
Signabat labarum, clypeorum insignia Christus  
Scripserat, ardebat summis crux addita cristis.  
Ipse senatorum meminit clarissimus ordo:  
Qui tunc concreto processit crine, catenis  
Squalens carcereis, aut nexus compede vasta,  
Complexusque pedes victoris ad inclyta flendo  
Procubuit vexilla jacens, tunc ille senatus  
Militiæ ultricis titulum, Christi que verendum  
Nomen adoravit, quod collucebat in armis.

Contra Symmachum, l. i. v. 464. 482.

with matted hair, squalid, in dungeon-chains, or bound together by the massy fetter, and having embraced the feet of the victor, lay prostrate in tears before thy renowned banners, calls to mind. Then did that senate adore the standard of the avenging army, and the venerable name of Christ that glittered on its armour."

The remarks of the Abbé on this passage are these:—"The authority of Prudentius is so much more considerable, as his work against Symmachus could not have been written above eighty years after Maxentius was defeated; and it cannot be doubted that Symmachus, Prudentius, and others, had seen and conversed with both officers and soldiers who were engaged with Constantine on this expedition." He adds, however, that "what the poet here says of the senate is not to be literally taken, as though that body had acknowledged the divinity of Christ. It is well known that a kind of worship was paid by the Romans to their military ensigns; and because the standards of Constantine presented on all sides the image of the cross, the poet availed himself of it, to describe the senate prostrate before the symbol of the Christian faith\*."—If now this be the only abatement

\* *Dissertation sur la Vision*, p. 71. The same explanation of this passage is given by Arivoli in his admirable edition of Prudentius:—*Quum Christi nomen esset labaro impressum, et mos esset, ut labarum a militibus adoraretur, quod semper imperatorem antecederet, recte ait Prudentius, senatum adorasse nomen*

ment in this account, it is obvious that Constantine must have experienced two miracles and visions; the former, as stated by himself to Eusebius; the latter, as related by Lactantius above. Accordingly, the question before put will once more recur: how could it happen that the latter were neither mentioned to Eusebius by the emperor, nor at all in his life by that writer?—Again: allowing it probable that Symmachus and Prudentius might have known both officers and soldiers, that had served under Constantine in his army at large; yet, if το στρατιωτικόν ἅπαν imply, as is fair to conclude, a body detached for a particular service, and the fifty to whose custody the standard was consigned, these, though still living and known, had much too good reasons to deny what the emperor had affirmed upon oath, and themselves hitherto vouched for. As to the second nocturnal vision, that is stated by Lactantius to have happened to the emperor alone—*communitus est in QUIETE Constantinus*—now though his success were miraculous, yet, as he chose to be silent on the subject, it can scarcely be expected, those under him, knowing less, should have said more. Besides, if, in the latter conflict, the sacred standard retained its power of ensuring success, the painting the shields were a needless expedient, undeserving a revelation from God to prescribe.

Christi, quod collucebat in armis. This however is a very different thing from the worship of the cross.

To the foregoing testimonies are added by the Abbé, those of Rufinus, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, Gelasius of Cyzicus, and an anonymous writer cited by Photius.

In the narration of Rufinus, it is worthy of remark that he entirely suppresses the noon-day appearance of the cross, and represents it as seen only by the emperor—*per soporem*—in a profound sleep. This cross he describes as appearing toward the eastern part of the heavens, and as blazing like fire, so as greatly to terrify him, till he was accosted by certain angels, who, addressing him by name, assured him he should conquer by the sign he had seen: *adstare sibi videt Angelos dicentes, CONSTANTINE, εν τῷ νυκτι*. Joyful at this declaration, and confident of victory, he transforms into military banners the sign in the heaven, and adapts that called the *labarum* to the likeness of the cross of our Lord\*.

From this, the account of Philostorgius considerably differs; since he describes the vision as real, though not appearing in the south, but the east, and, as it should seem, not at noon, but at night; for he speaks of the cross, without mention of the sun, and represents it as consisting of a texture of

\* From the expression of Rufinus, it appears that *Labarum* was a term in use before Constantine formed this standard, which being substituted for that so called, borne before the emperor, the name became appropriate to this of the cross:—*Labarum quem dicunt, in speciem dominicæ crucis EXAPTAT. Hist. Eccles. ix. 9.*

light, adding that it was encircled by a number of stars, so grouped as to form in the *Latin language* — ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ *φωνή*—*By this, conquer* \*.

The narrative of Socrates is copied from Eusebius with some slight variations, but that of Sozomen materially differs, since, with Rufinus, he states the cross to have been seen only in a dream, though accompanied by angels who spoke as before. He adds: “And this also is said, that Christ likewise appeared to point out to him the symbol of the cross, and admonish him to make one like it, and use it in his warfares, as the auxiliary and index of victory.” To this, the account in Eusebius is added.

Theodoret, not being directly led to the subject, hath in no way mentioned the story; but speaking of Constantine’s conversion, he compares it to that of St. Paul, “whose vocation was not from men, nor by man, but—οὐρανοθεν—from heaven:” an expression equally applicable to the *dream* and the *vision*.

Gelasius of Cyzicus, in his Acts of the Council of Nice, thus mentions the miraculous vision:

\* Dissertat. sur la Vision, p. 78. 83. 85. 87. 90. 93. From the original of this passage it is obvious that this description of the cross materially differs from every other; for it hence appears that the outline forming the figure was only radiant, and not the body of the cross, which being like the reality, or wood, opaque, rendered the inscription upon it more clear;—Φανερόν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ τοὺς ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ τὴν τύπην τῆς σταυροῦ, ὥστε ἅπαντες κεχαρισμένοι, καὶ ἱερογραμματοῖς τῆς αὐτῆς ἸΑΗΣ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὴν νίκην.



“ The battle being thus resolved upon, and either army of equal strength, God declared himself for Constantine, by shewing him the salutary sign of the cross resplendent in the heaven, the import of which vision was explained by the inscription, *ΤΕΤΩΝΙΧΧ*—BY THIS CONQUER.” To which he however subjoins, “ This account is regarded by unbelievers as a fable and forgery *in favour of our DOGMAS.*”

The anonymous extract in Photius intimates, that “ as Constantine could not obtain peace from Maxentius by treaty, he had recourse to arms, and at first was worsted, till the representation of a radiant cross appeared to him in the heaven, and by the letters on it joyfully announced victory ; for the inscription expressed, *By this conquer.* Renewing the attack, this victory terminated both the war and the tyrant. Prior to the rencounter, having formed the divine vision into the figure of a trophy, and surrounded it with jewels set in gold, he gave it to the squadron of horse that preceded, to bear before him.”

From a deliberate reflection on these various accounts, what general conclusion can be drawn ? or, how, to obtain a general conclusion, must the contents of each be applied ? Will it be said that the aggregate of proof on the whole is sufficient to establish *a vision* ? It remains then to be asked, if one vision, or more ? if a vision at noon, or at night ? with the army, and awake ? alone, and soundly

soundly sleeping?—or, both? if at noon and in presence of the army,—or, at least, of the guard, that bore the labarum—how, when all were equally spectators, should the vision be so differently described? Did Constantine vary in his account, at different times, or why, when his account in Eusebius lay open to all, should others differ from him in reporting the fact? The appearance is on all hands allowed to be miraculous, but is it not a miracle as great, that the cross should have been seen at once in the south and the east? that Constantine, from noon, should have wondered at its meaning, till Christ explained it at night; and yet that angels were present with the cross, and at once explained its intent? that this vision should have been seen on a march, and yet in the midst of a battle? that the letters on the cross should, at the same time they were stars, be of gold? that the language inscribed should be Greek, and yet not Greek, but Latin? that the standard should confer victory, and yet require protection? that the property of insuring success should ever inhere in this cross, yet to render the emperor successful, the monogram must be marked on his shields?—These, and more contradictions, do the several vouchers assert. If then to establish a fact, and especially one that is miraculous, such contrary evidence be offered, to what conclusion must we come? or what other inference draw, than this—that where there exists a presumption diametrically opposite to the intent of the alleged miracle—as is  
in

in this case the declaration of Christ to the Roman Governor: "*my kingdom is not of THIS WORLD: if my kingdom were of this world, THEN WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence,*"—to supersede such an objection will demand the strongest of proof. Till, therefore, a criterion be assigned, to discriminate, in these different testimonies, between falsehood and truth, we must join the unbelievers who maintained, that the whole story was fiction, contrived to subserve an interested purpose. Shall it be answered, this criterion exists in Constantine's relation; it is obvious to reply that, what accords not with it, should at once be rejected as false. But—as the Abbé intimates—Prudentius might have received his information from officers or soldiers eye-witnesses of the vision, as the Martyr Artemius is reported to have been; on this ground is their testimony not to be received, because it disagrees with the emperor's? Though the emperor could not testify to the vision in his sleep, they could witness what they saw with their eyes open, as faithfully and fully as he; and till it be proved that the other inconsistencies came not from the same quarter, they are intitled to proportionable credit—or why else were they brought?—will it be asked what credit that may be? the obvious answer is, NONE. The story of the noon-day vision was, no doubt, well concerted, and the soldiers, that composed the emperor's guard, properly

perly instructed at the time : but afterward, from forgetfulness, repetition, or design, the relation became embellished, and materially changed. That this too happened to the emperor himself, there is strong reason to think. For as the appearances to him, whilst sleeping, could only be described by himself, the variations and contradictions with which they are averred, must ultimately recoil upon him\*.

There are still other attestations to this miraculous vision, which, hitherto, have not been discussed : these are the public monuments and inscriptions that remain.—That these monuments and inscriptions refer to the story, it will be most rea-

\* If Constantine's account, which he swore to, were true, he ought, when those forged ones were solemnly asserted, and himself appealed to in public for their truth, to have formally at once disavowed them, and as publicly stated the fact : otherwise the attestation of the emperor himself must forfeit its claim to belief. For this rule of evidence Lord Mansfield may be cited :—"The attention of the House [of Lords] was, in the Anglesea cause, so much fixed upon the forgery, and the noble lords, who were convinced of that fraud, felt so justly the consequences of it, that you judged it best to declare to them THE ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLE, that if they were convinced of the forgery, they must *disbelieve* THE POSITIVE PAROLE EVIDENCE *on that side*, SWEAR IT WHO WILL." Letters to Lord Mansfield from Andrew Stuart, p. 26. It is observed by Mr. Stuart, in reference to this case, that "no part of the forged certificate was written by either Lord or Lady Anglesea, nor was there any proof of its having been contrived, or executed by their orders ;" nor, be it added, was the fact in that question a MIRACLE.

dily granted\*; but was Eusebius convinced by them, that the miracle was real, till at last Constantine swore to its truth? Affuredly, no; nor after, from his own declaration. Nor, in asserting it, could

\* After all, what, of these monuments, do the two principal attest?—One, that under a banner of the sign of victory\* (which the cross incontestably was) and the genuine proof of fortitude (in him who suffered on it) Constantine had freed Rome, its senate and citizens, from the yoke of tyranny, avenged its lost freedom, and restored it to its pristine amplitude and splendor.

HOC. SALVTARI. SIGNO. VERO. FORTITVDINIS. INDICIO  
CIVITATEM. VESTRAM. TYRANNIDIS. IVGO. LIBERAVI  
ET S. P. Q. R. IN. LIBERTATEM. VINDICANS  
PRISTINAE. AMPLITVDINI. ET. SPLENDORI. RESTITVI

There is here, however, no mention of either noon-day or nocturnal vision, nor the least circumstance respecting either; which however might be looked for in such an inscription.

The inscription on the other was still less in point, till pope Clement XII. in 1773 repaired the arc, and supplied the defect. Originally, so far was it from noticing a miraculous vision, that it conjointly ascribed the success of Constantine, in the language of paganism itself, to an inward impulse of divinity, his own magnanimity, and the exertions of his army: *instinctu divinitatis*, &c. The following is the inscription from the original: the printed copies vary. (See Arivali. p. 740.)

IMP. CAES. FL. CONSTANTINO. MAXIMO  
P. F. AVGUSTO. S. P. Q. R.  
QVOD. INSTINCTV. DIVINITATIS. MENTIS  
MAGNITVDINE. CVM. EXERCITV. SVO  
TAM. DE. TYRANNO. QVAM. DE. OMNI. EIVS  
FACTIONE. VNO. TEMPORE. IVSTIS  
REMPVBLICAM. VLTVS. EST. ARMIS  
ARCVI. TRIVMPHIS. INSIGNEM. DICAVIT

\* That is, a sign of VICTORY, *συνημια*; and so the correspondent term *הַשִּׁמְעָה* signifies.

these



these monuments be regarded in a better light than our own :

Where London's column pointing to the skies,  
Like a tall bully, lifts its head and lies.

In a word :—The powerful inducements of policy and party, the obvious character of Constantine, and the opinions of the time, when judiciously considered and properly combined, present in themselves an easy solution of the whole contrivance and fraud. Nor will the materials be far to seek, from which the work was composed. The resemblance between the vision of Constantine that caused his conversion, and that which converted St. Paul, is much too glaring to require a proof ; and as Antigonus, successor to Alexander, is said \*

to

\* As Tollius, in the incidental notice of this, with other such devices, omitted to point out his author, the Abbé gently insinuates, that no such fact can be found. Mr. Gibbon hath adopted the hint, and improved not a little upon it. But whatever may become of Tollius and his authority, as tending to shew whence the fiction might arise, it is judged, enough has been offered to prove, that the vision was a fraud.

The passage of Tollius is as follows : “ Mais moy, trouvant que le roi Antigonus, successeur d’Alexandre le Grand, s’est servi du même stratagème, feignant d’avoir vu au ciel un *pentagone*, qui est le symbole du salut, avec ces paroles, ‘ *In hoc signo vinces,*’ et qu’il le fit peindre aux boucliers de ses soldats, et gagna ainsi la bataille : trouvant aussi qu’un roi de Portugal a eu la même vision que Constantin, et qu’il a par là remporté la victoire sur ses ennemis, j’avoue que je considère tous ces miracles comme des finesses militaires des grands capitaines. On trouvera dans tous les

to have availed himself of an appearance in the heavens, which, like this, was styled a *salutary sign*, accompanied with the words, *By this shalt thou conquer*; and, by painting the symbol on the shields of his soldiers, was thereby rendered victorious—it seems hardly possible a doubt can be left, whence Constantine's vision arose.

les siècles une infinité de ces inventions.” *Préface to Boileau's translation of Longinus*.—It is observable that Abbé Du Voisin here substitutes a *triangle* for a *pentagon*: [—were these terms changed whilst the book was printing? ]—As Tolland cites the inscription in Latin, it is probable, that he took it from a Latin writer; if so, it will be the less wondered, that it should be sought for in vain in the Greek.—But setting this entirely aside; whilst, amongst the prodigies recorded by Livy, we meet with the vision of an altar in the heavens, and beings of the human form, clothed in white, standing near; also, of a person, though man, superior to, and more august than the human race, addressing consuls in their sleep, and pointing out the means of victory; it is easy to find a solution for the vision in question, without recurring to miracle. See Livy, book xxiv. 10, and viii. 6.







[illegible]



